SHOGAKUKAN

覇者への道

史記

横山光輝

1

CHINESE HISTORY[SHIKI]

MITSUTERU YOKOYAMA PRESENTS

BIG GOLD COMICS

BIG GOLD COMICS

史記 1 横山光輝 MITSUTERU YOKOYAMA PRESENTS CHINESE HISTORY SHIKI

小学館

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BIG GOLD COMICS

CHINESE HISTORY[SHIKI]

BIG GOLD COMICS

ビッグゴールド・コミックス

博愛の人①……ジョージ秋山
妖怪博士の朝食①……水木しげる
平成野球草子①……水島新司
ケースハード①……松本零士
アトンの娘①……里中満智子

中国第一の歴史書の完璧なコミック化!!
宮刑に処せられ、宦官になってなお「史記」執筆に全力を尽した
司馬遷自身の苦闘の生涯を第一話とし、最初の覇者・桓公を支えた管仲、
大国・晋を内乱に陥れた側室・驪姫(りき)の陰謀、
文公・重耳を覇者とした腹心の部下の活躍、など……
春秋・戦国の世を駆け抜けた激しい人間たちの生きざまを描く!!

横山光輝

MITSUTERU YOKOYAMA PROFILE

昭和29年に「音無しの剣」でデビュー。「鉄人28号」「おてんば天使」「伊賀の影丸」等で不動の地位を確立する。昭和42年より「水滸伝」を連載、さらに昭和46年からライフワークともいえる「三国志」の連載を開始する。「バビル2世」「時の行者」等、SFの傑作も多い。「史記」は、古代中国史全体を見極めようとする新しいライフワークだ。

SHOGAKUKAN
覇者への道

史記

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1

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史記 1

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MITSUTERU YOKOYAMA PRESENTS/CHINESE HISTORY[SHIKI]

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SHIJI

YOKOYAMA MITSUTERU

1

ROAD TO HEGEMONY

BIG GOLD COMICS

YOKOYAMA
MITSUTERU

VOLUME 1
ROAD TO HEGEMONY

SHIJI,
RECORDS OF THE GRAND HISTORIAN

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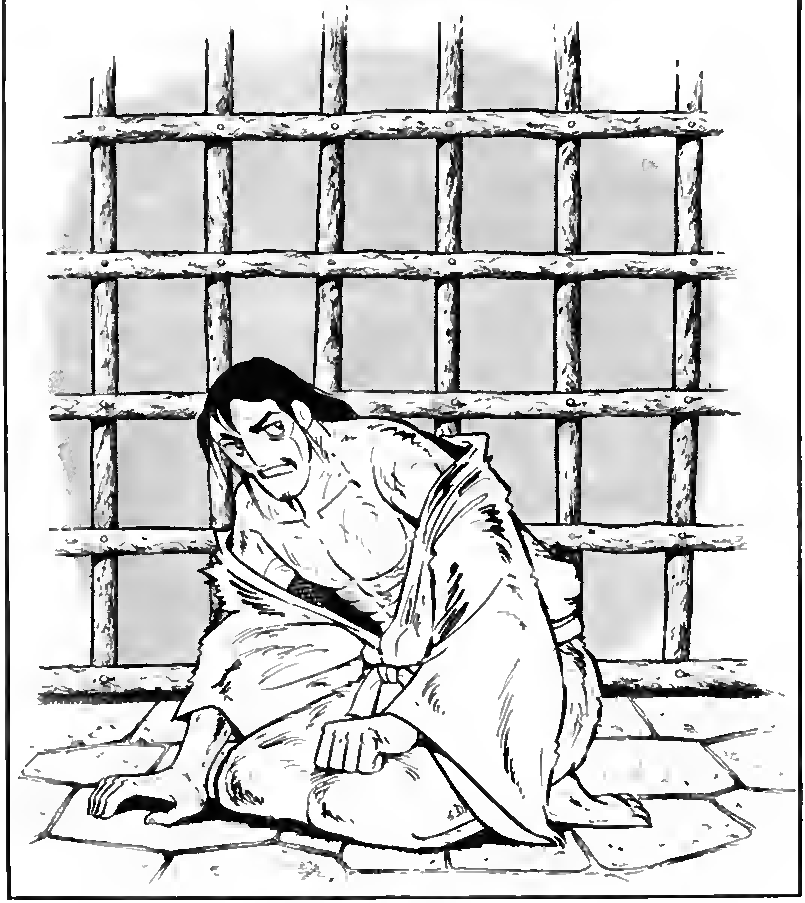
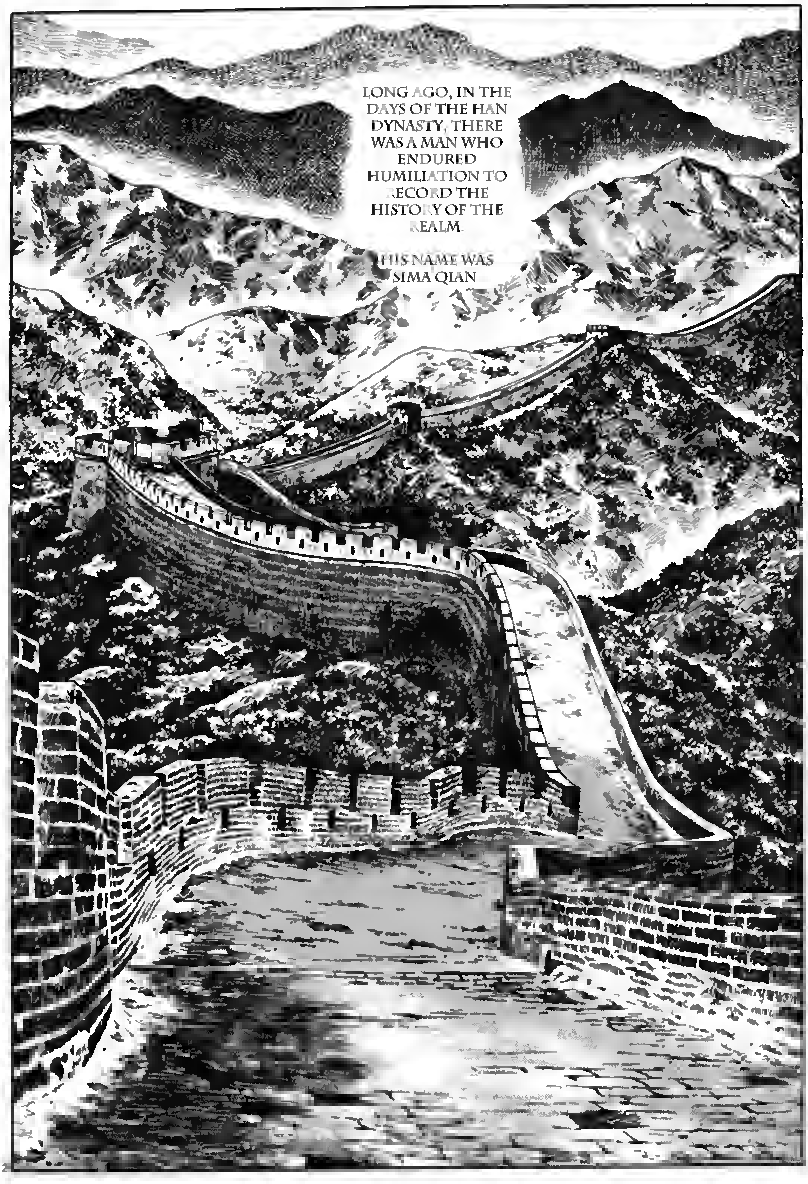
TRANSLATED
BY HOX

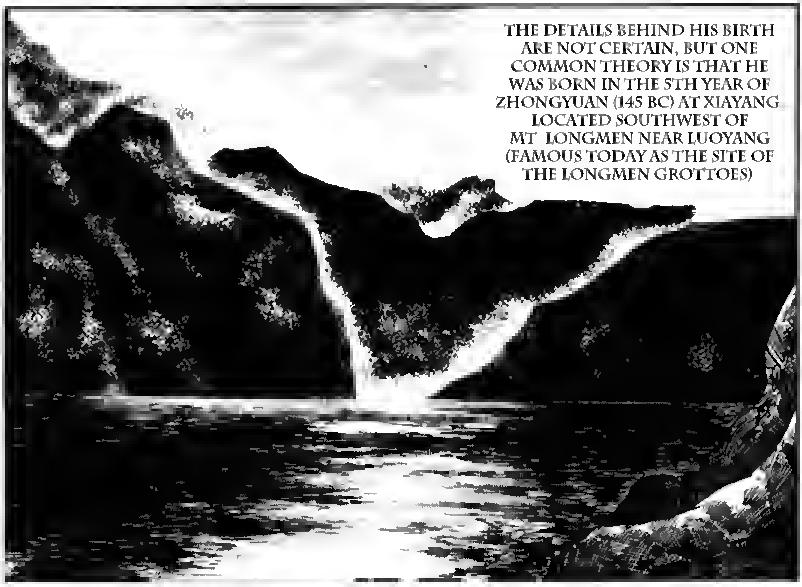
CHAPTER 1

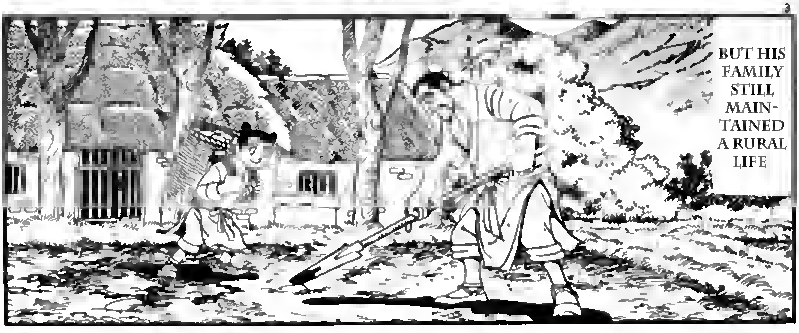
SIMA QIAN



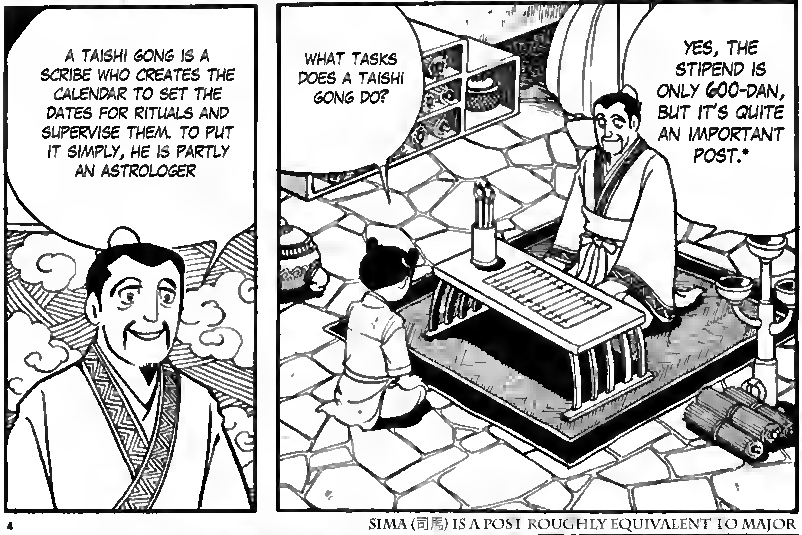

LONG AGO, IN THE DAYS OF THE HAN DYNASTY, THERE WAS A MAN WHO ENDURED HUMILIATION TO RECORD THE HISTORY OF THE REALM.
HIS NAME WAS SIMA QIAN.

*THE "X YEAR OF Y" YOU LL SEE IN THIS MANGA REFERS TO THE IMPERIAL REIGN ERA TITLES.


THE DETAILS BEHIND HIS BIRTH ARE NOT CERTAIN, BUT ONE COMMON THEORY IS THAT HE WAS BORN IN THE 5TH YEAR OF ZHONGYUAN (145 BC) AT XIAYANG LOCATED SOUTHWEST OF MT. LONGMEN NEAR LUOYANG (FAMOUS TODAY AS THE SITE OF THE LONGMEN GROTTOES)



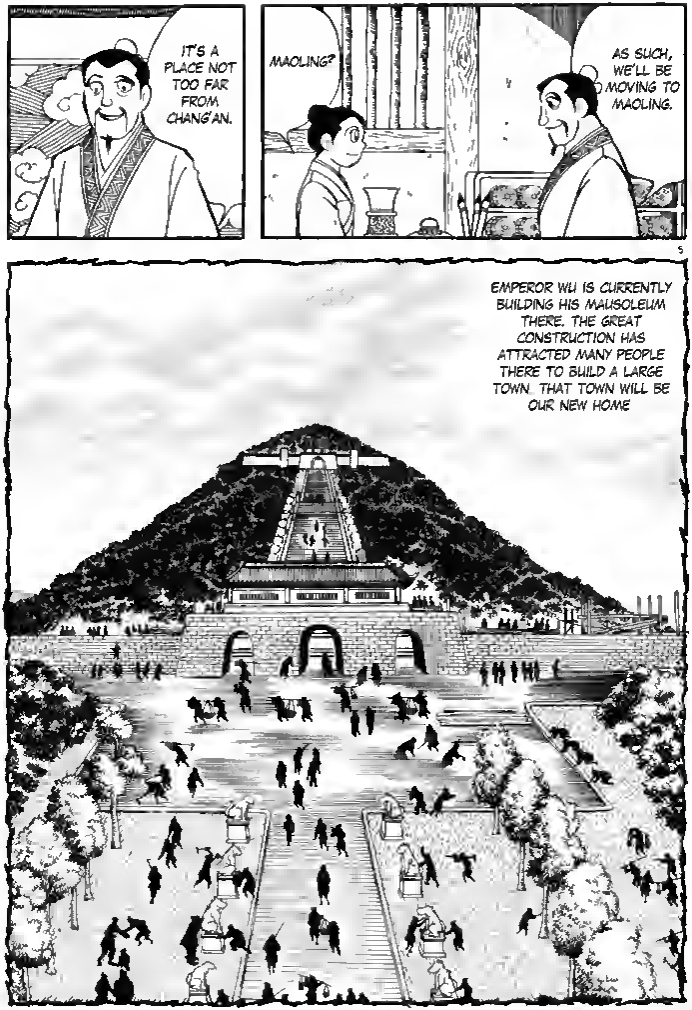
DAN (石) CHINESE MEASUREMENT OF VOLUME, USED HERE TO DENOTE BUSHELS OF RICE

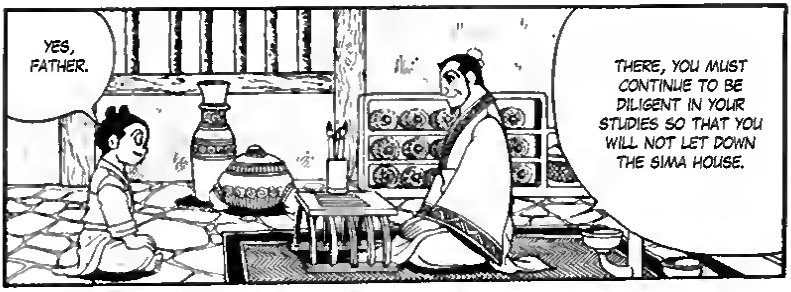

A TAISHI GONG IS A SCRIBE WHO CREATES THE CALENDAR TO SET THE DATES FOR RITUALS AND SUPERVISE THEM. TO PUT IT SIMPLY, HE IS PARTLY AN ASTROLOGER
WHAT TASKS DOES A TAISHI GONG DO?
YES, THE STIPEND IS ONLY 600-DAN, BUT IT'S QUITE AN IMPORTANT POST.*

SIMA (司馬) IS A POST ROUGHLY EQUIVALENT TO MAJOR

I FEARED THAT OUR RIGHT TO THAT NAME MIGHT END WITH MY GENERATION, BUT IT SEEMS OUR HOUSE'S FORTUNES HAVE CHANGED FOR THE BETTER AT LAST.
QIAN, OUR FAMILY MAY HAVE FALLEN ON HARD TIMES BUT WE ARE A NOBLE HOUSE SINCE THE TIME OF THE ZHOU DYNASTY. IT WAS THEN THAT ONE OF OUR ANCESTORS EARNED THE SURNAME "SIMA" FOR HIS SERVICE IN THAT POST.

*TAISHI (太史) IS COMMONLY TRANSLATED ASTROLOGER, SCRIBE, CLERK, OR HISTORIAN. WHILE WE IN THE MODERN DAY WOULD CONSIDER THESE PROFESSIONS AS DISTINCT, SUCH A DISTINCTION WAS NOT NECESSARILY HELD BACK THEN.


IT'S A PLACE NOT TOO FAR FROM CHANG'AN.
MAOLING?
AS SUCH, WE'LL BE MOVING TO MAOLING.
5
EMPEROR WU IS CURRENTLY BUILDING HIS MAUSOLEUM THERE. THE GREAT CONSTRUCTION HAS ATTRACTED MANY PEOPLE THERE TO BUILD A LARGE TOWN. THAT TOWN WILL BE OUR NEW HOME

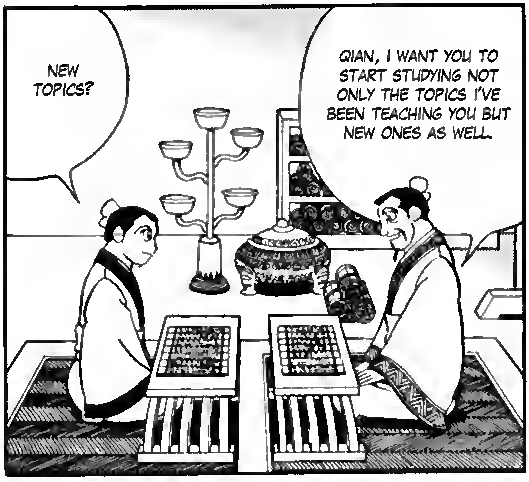

YES, FATHER.
THERE, YOU MUST CONTINUE TO BE DILIGENT IN YOUR STUDIES SO THAT YOU WILL NOT LET DOWN THE SIMA HOUSE.

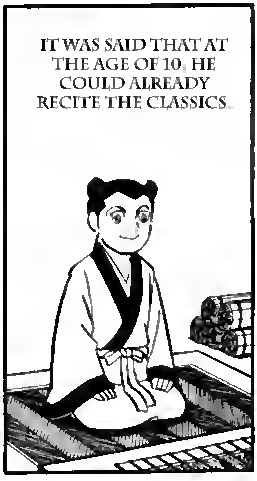
THUS, AT THE AGE OF 6 SIMA QIAN AND HIS FAMILY MOVED TO MAOLING

6

MAOLING WAS A VIBRANT TOWN BUSTLING WITH LIFE

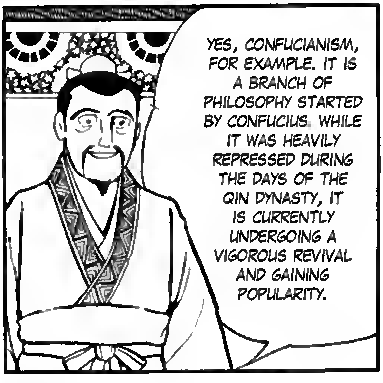
AT MAOLING, THE YOUNG SIMA QIAN DEVOTED HIS ENERGY STUDYING UNDER HIS FATHER'S TUTELAGE


NEW TOPICS?
QIAN, I WANT YOU TO START STUDYING NOT ONLY THE TOPICS I'VE BEEN TEACHING YOU BUT NEW ONES AS WELL.


IT WAS SAID THAT AT THE AGE OF 10, HE COULD ALREADY RECITE THE CLASSICS.

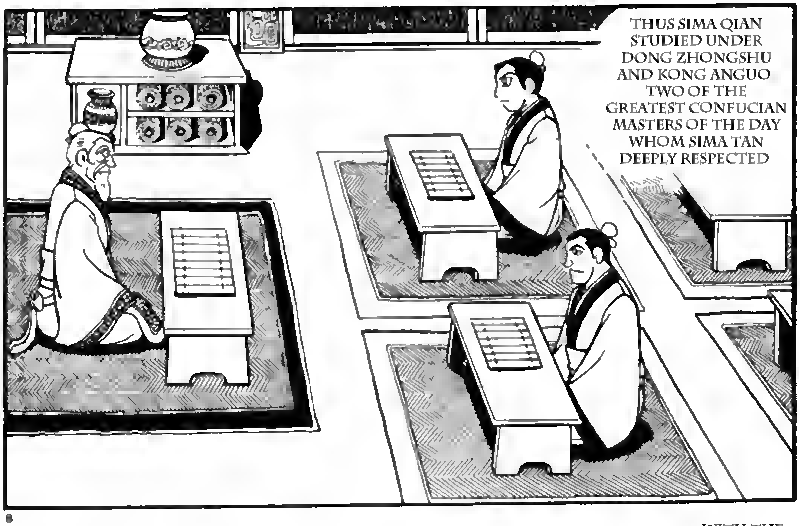
7

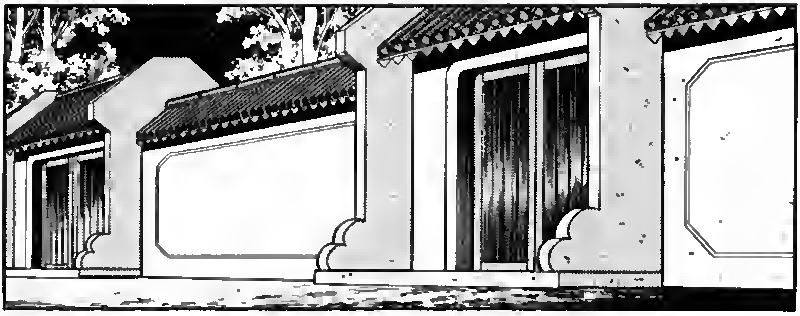
I WANT YOU TO BECOME A PUPIL UNDER DONG ZHONGSHU. MASTER DONG ZHONGSHU IS CURRENTLY ONE OF THE MOST RENOWNED SCHOLARS IN THE REALM AS WELL AS SERVING AS AN ADVISOR TO THE EMPEROR.


YES, CONFUCIANISM, FOR EXAMPLE. IT IS A BRANCH OF PHILOSOPHY STARTED BY CONFUCIUS. WHILE IT WAS HEAVILY REPRESSED DURING THE DAYS OF THE QIN DYNASTY, IT IS CURRENTLY UNDERGOING A VIGOROUS REVIVAL AND GAINING POPULARITY.

WUJING BOSHI (五經博士), LITERALLY MEANING "FIVE CLASSICS ERUDITES," REFERRED TO SCHOLARS WHO MASTERED THE FIVE CLASSICS OF THE CONFUCIAN CANON. THESE FIVE CLASSICS ARE THE **SHIJING** (CLASSIC OF POETRY), **SHUJING** (BOOK OF DOCUMENTS), **LIJI** (BOOK OF RITES), **I CHING** (BOOK OF CHANGES), AND **CHUNQIU** (SPRING AND AUTUMN ANNALS).

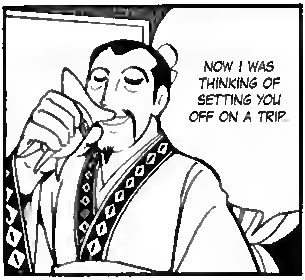
YES, FATHER.
YES, AND I WANT YOU TO ALSO STUDY UNDER A WUJING BOSHI. STUDENTS WHO GO ONTO BECOME ERUDITES (BOSHI) ARE GUARANTEED POSTS IN THE IMPERIAL BUREAUCRACY.


THUS SIMA QIAN STUDIED UNDER DONG ZHONGSHU AND KONG ANGUO, TWO OF THE GREATEST CONFUCIAN MASTERS OF THE DAY WHOM SIMA TAN DEEPLY RESPECTED

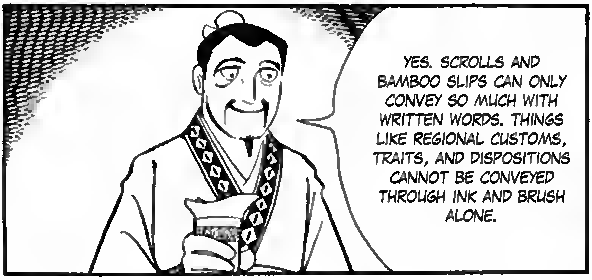


I AM NOW TWENTY, FATHER.
QIAN, HOW OLD ARE YOU NOW...?

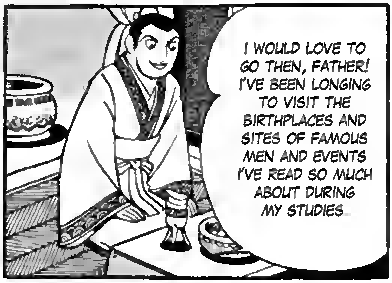
A TRIP?

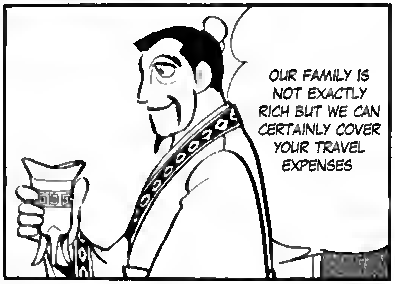

NOW I WAS THINKING OF SETTING YOU OFF ON A TRIP.

YES, AND YOU'VE GROWN TO BE A FINE YOUNG MAN I'M CONFIDENT YOU WILL MAKE A FINE HEIR TO OUR HOUSE AND ME.


YES. SCROLLS AND BAMBOO SLIPS CAN ONLY CONVEY SO MUCH WITH WRITTEN WORDS. THINGS LIKE REGIONAL CUSTOMS, TRAITS, AND DISPOSITIONS CANNOT BE CONVEYED THROUGH INK AND BRUSH ALONE.

THEN YOU'LL REALLY LET ME GO ON A TRIP, FATHER!?
TRAVELLING AND EXPERIENCING THESE THINGS FIRSTHAND WILL MAKE A STRONGER IMPRESSION UPON YOUR MIND THAN EVEN HUNDREDS OF WRITTEN WORDS. THESE BITS OF KNOWLEDGE WILL PROVE USEFUL IF YOU BECOME A TAISHI GONG ONE DAY.

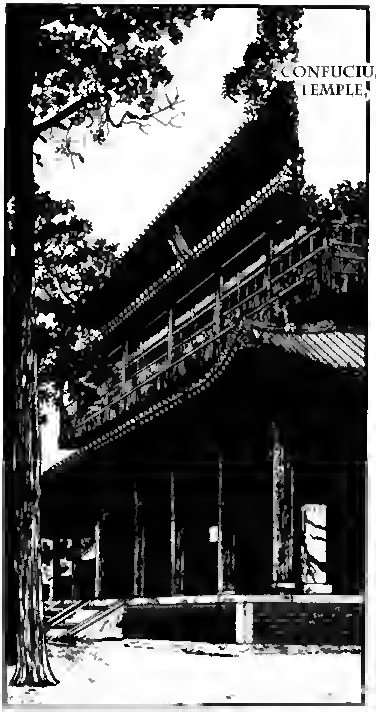

I WOULD LOVE TO GO THEN, FATHER! I'VE BEEN LONGING TO VISIT THE BIRTHPLACES AND SITES OF FAMOUS MEN AND EVENTS I'VE READ SO MUCH ABOUT DURING MY STUDIES.

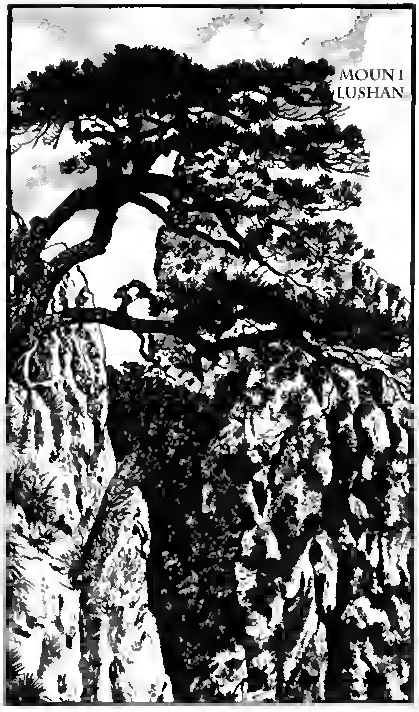

OUR FAMILY IS NOT EXACTLY RICH BUT WE CAN CERTAINLY COVER YOUR TRAVEL EXPENSES

YES, GO OUT AND LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS WORLD, MY SON. IT WILL SURELY HELP IN RAISING THE SIMA HOUSE'S HONOUR IN DUE TIME.

10

THUS AT THE AGE OF 20 SIMA QIAN JOURNEYED ACROSS THE HAN EMPIRE

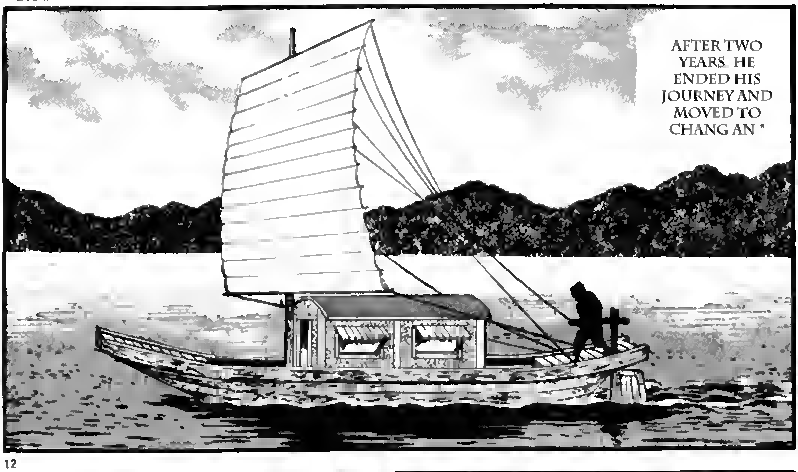

CONFUCIUS
TEMPLE


MOUNT
LUSHAN

AND MANY
OTHER FAMOUS
PLACES ACROSS
THE REALM DID
SIMA QIAN VISIT
WITH GREAT
ENTHUSASM.

AT EVERY PLACE HE TALKED WITH THE LOCALS ABOUT THEIR CUSTOMS AND FAMOUS PEOPLE BORN THERE OR HISTORICAL EVENTS THAT HAD OCCURRED THERE

*CHANG AN WAS THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL AT THIS TIME

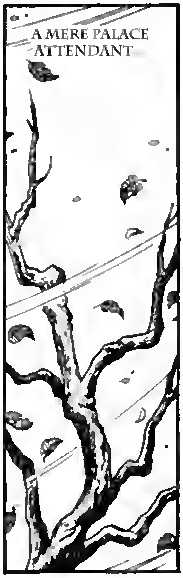


12

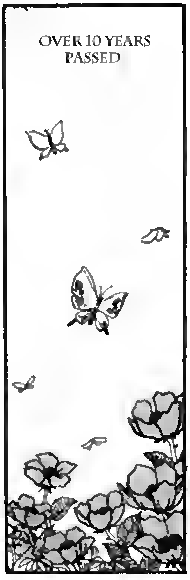
THE NEXT YEAR HE WAS APPOINTED AS PALACE ATTEND ANT (LANGZHONG) WHILE IT WAS A LOW POSITION, IT WAS THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS A MORE ILLUSTRIOUS CAREER IN THE IMPERIAL BUREAUCRACY

HOWEVER, SIMA QIAN WAS NOT BLESSED BY ANY OPPORTUNITY FOR ADVANCE MENT

A DEPRESSING ANOMALY

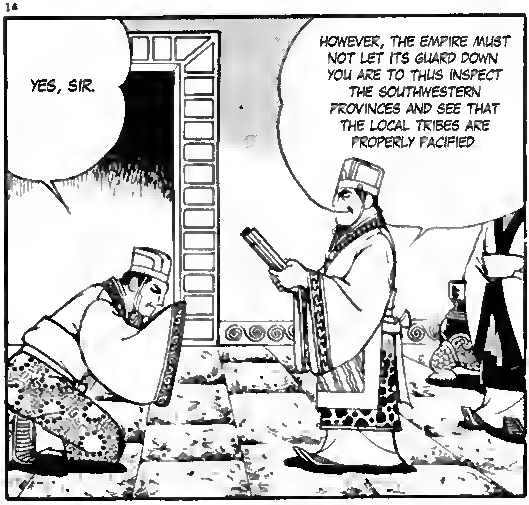

A MERE PALACE ATTENDANT

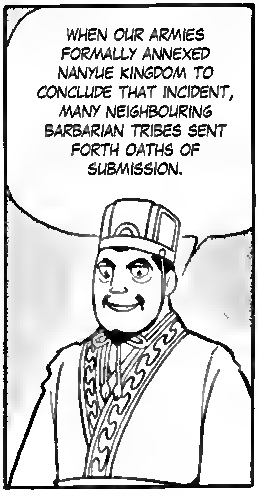
WITH HIM REMAINING,


OVER 10 YEARS PASSED

13

HOWEVER THINGS CHANGED IN THE 6TH YEAR OF THE YUANDING ERA (111 BC) SIMA QIAN WAS THEN 35 YEARS OLD

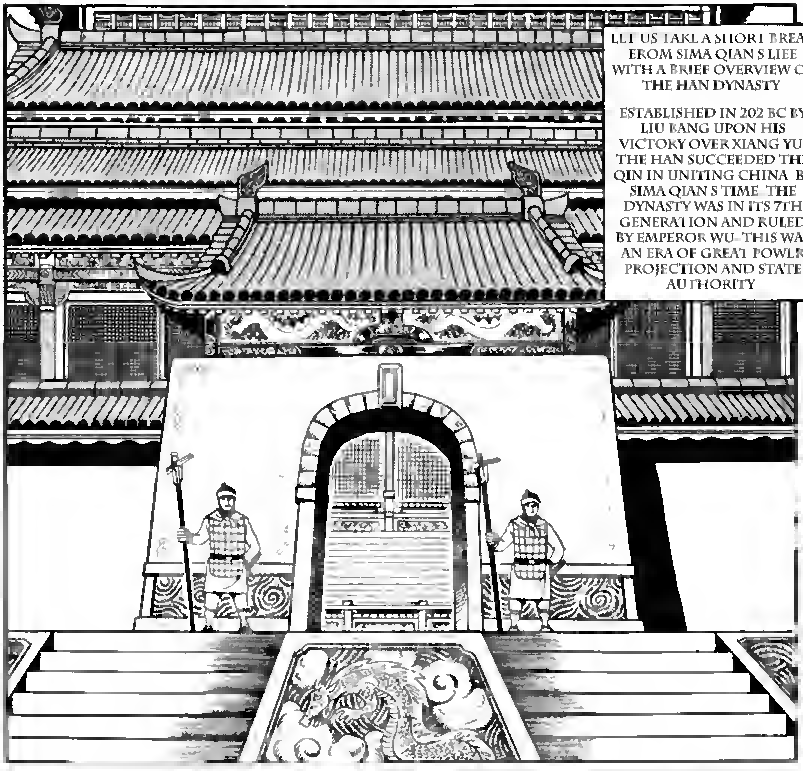

YES, SIR.
HOWEVER, THE EMPIRE MUST NOT LET ITS GUARD DOWN YOU ARE TO THUS INSPECT THE SOUTHWESTERN PROVINCES AND SEE THAT THE LOCAL TRIBES ARE PROPERLY PACIFIED


WHEN OUR ARMIES FORMALLY ANNEXED NANYUE KINGDOM TO CONCLUDE THAT INCIDENT, MANY NEIGHBOURING BARBARIAN TRIBES SENT FORTH OATHS OF SUBMISSION.

*NANYUE KINGDOM: ANCIENT KINGDOM MOSTLY LOCATED IN MODERN-DAY NORTHERN VIETNAM AND THE SOUTHERN CHINESE PROVINCES OF GUANGDONG AND GUANXI

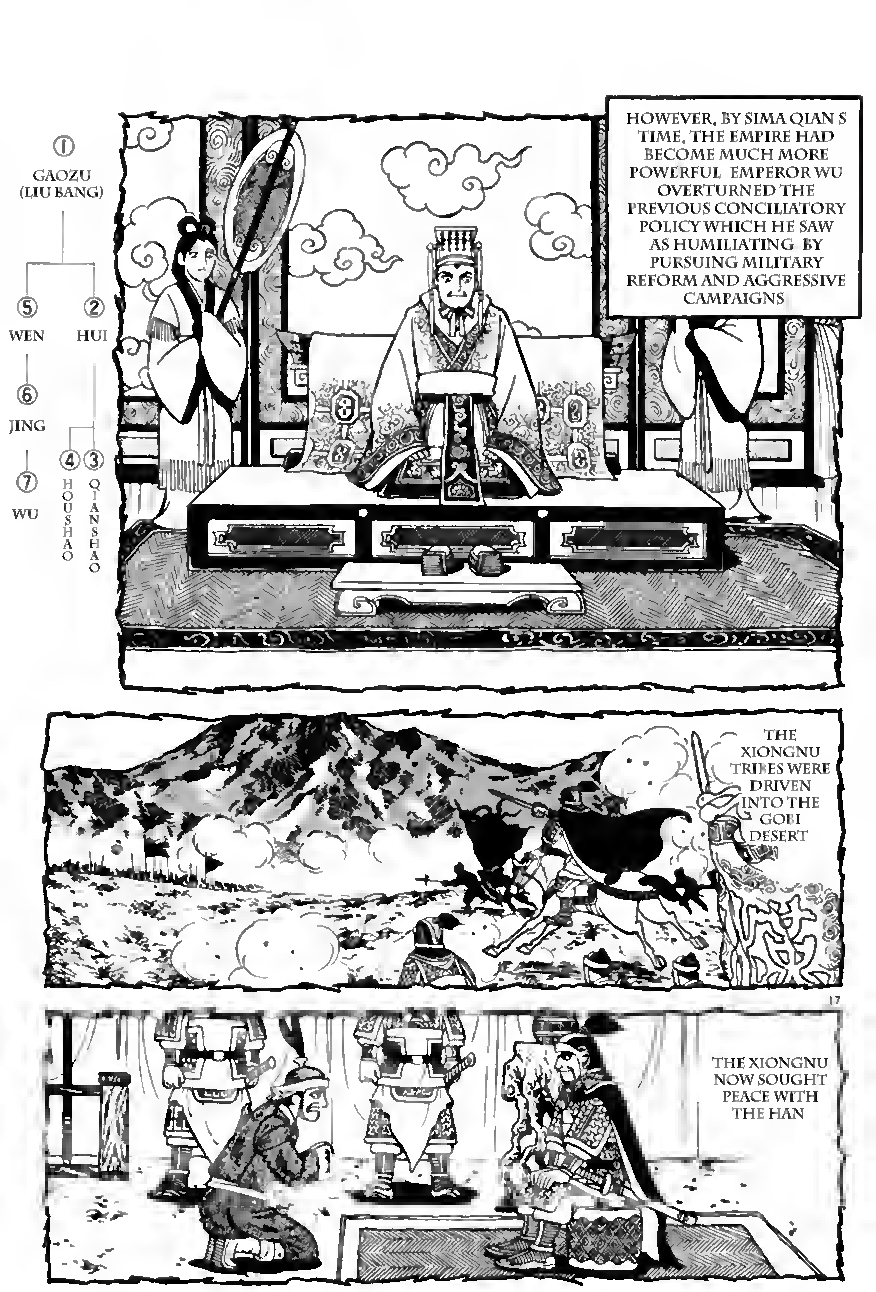
THUS AT THE AGE OF 35, SIMA YI WAS APPOINTED TO HIS FIRST IMPORTANT POST. WHILE HIS DUTIES WERE IN DISTANT BARBARIAN LANDS (MODERN-DAY YUNNAN AND SICHUAN), HE COULD NOT FEEL MORE HONOURED.

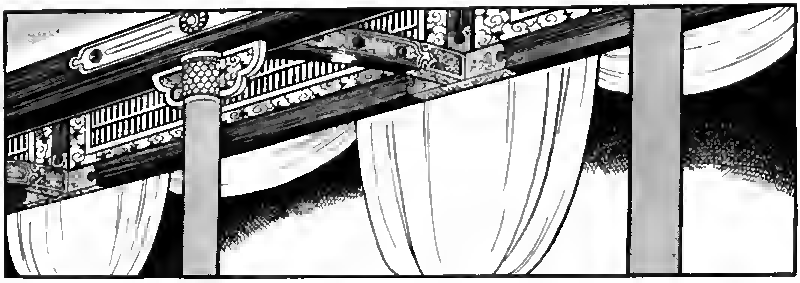
15


LET US TAKE A SHORT BREAK FROM SIMA QIAN'S LIFE WITH A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE HAN DYNASTY
ESTABLISHED IN 202 BC BY LIU BANG UPON HIS VICTORY OVER XIANG YU THE HAN SUCCEEDED THE QIN IN UNITING CHINA. BY SIMA QIAN'S TIME, THE DYNASTY WAS IN ITS 7TH GENERATION AND RULED BY EMPEROR WU. THIS WAS AN ERA OF GREAT POWER PROJECTION AND STATE AUTHORITY

BACK WHEN LIU BANG HAD FOUNDED THE DYNASTY, THE FRONTIERS WERE PLAGUED BY FREQUENT RAIDS FROM THE XIONGNU.
16
THUS, LIU BANG AND THE EARLY HAN EMPERORS GAVE TRIBUTE TO THE XIONGNU AND WEDDED THEIR DAUGHTERS TO THE CHANYU* SO THAT THEY COULD INSTEAD FOCUS ON THE EMPIRE'S DOMESTIC SITUATION

*CHANYU: XIONGNU TITLE FOR SUPREME RULER


① GAOZU (LIU BANG)
⑤ WEN
② HUI
⑥ JING
④ HOUSHAO
③ QIANSHAO
⑦ WU
HOWEVER, BY SIMA QIAN'S TIME, THE EMPIRE HAD BECOME MUCH MORE POWERFUL. EMPEROR WU OVERTURNED THE PREVIOUS CONCILIATORY POLICY WHICH HE SAW AS HUMILIATING. BY PURSUING MILITARY REFORM AND AGGRESSIVE CAMPAIGNS
THE XIONGNU TRIBES WERE DRIVEN INTO THE GOBI DESERT
17
THE XIONGNU NOW SOUGHT PEACE WITH THE HAN



18

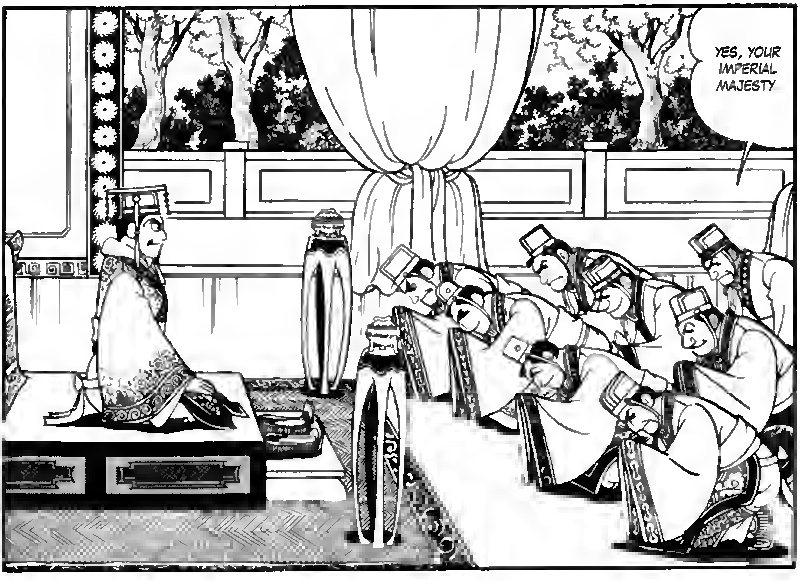
NOW THAT THE EMPIRE IS ENJOYING UNPRECEDENTED SECURITY AND PROSPERITY, I AM THINKING OF CONDUCTING A FENG-SHAN RITUAL.

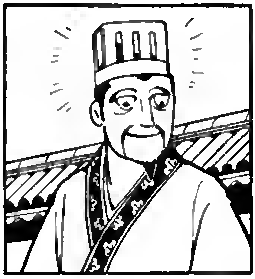
I COULD NOT AGREE MORE, YOUR IMPERIAL MAJESTY
YES.

THE FENG-SHAN RITUAL WAS LAST CONDUCTED BY THE FIRST EMPEROR OF QIN. HAVING VANQUISHED THE XIONGNU TRIBES, MY DEEDS NOW CLEARLY SURPASS THAN EVEN HIS DEEDS. AS SUCH, IT IS ONLY APPROPRIATE THAT I HOLD THE FENG-SHAN RITUAL AT LAST.

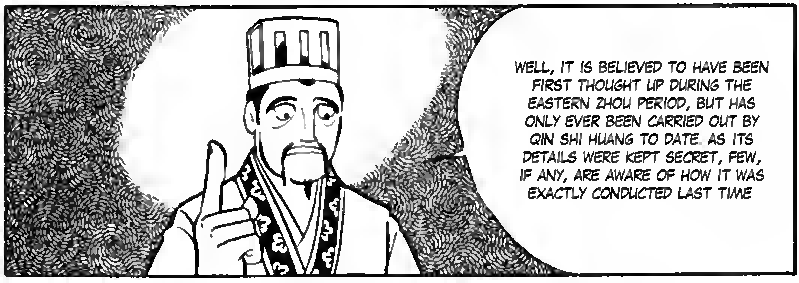
GOOD, THEN I HEREBY ORDER THE NECESSARY PREPARA-TIONS.

19

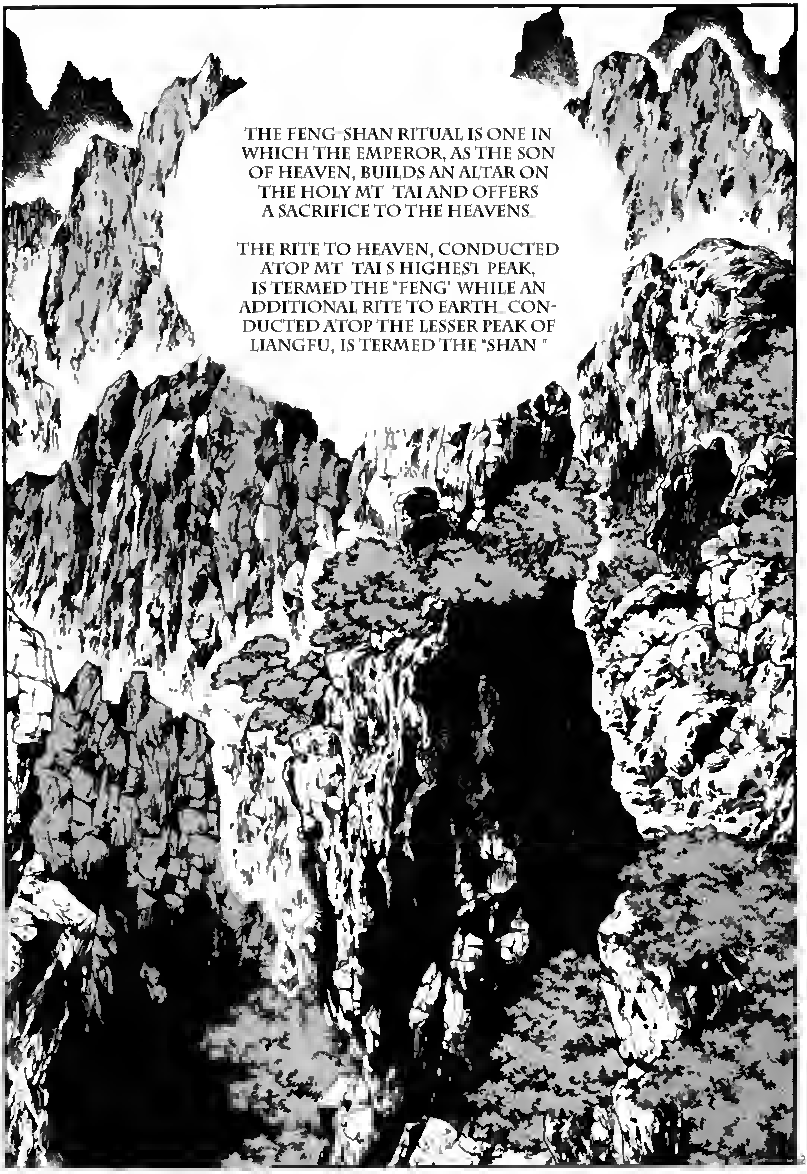

YES, YOUR IMPERIAL MAJESTY

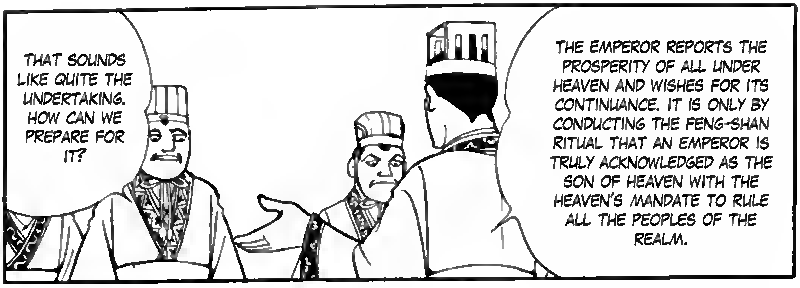


20


WELL, IT IS BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN FIRST THOUGHT UP DURING THE EASTERN ZHOU PERIOD, BUT HAS ONLY EVER BEEN CARRIED OUT BY QIN SHI HUANG TO DATE. AS ITS DETAILS WERE KEPT SECRET, FEW, IF ANY, ARE AWARE OF HOW IT WAS EXACTLY CONDUCTED LAST TIME

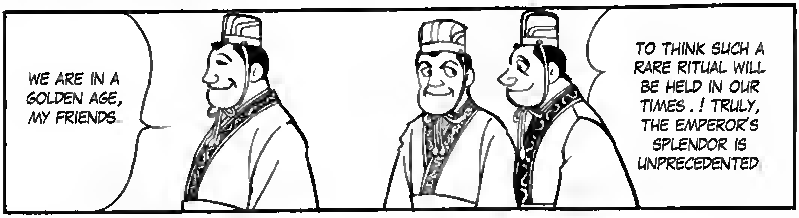
*QIN SHI HUANG FIRST EMPEROR OF QIN


THE FENG-SHAN RITUAL IS ONE IN WHICH THE EMPEROR, AS THE SON OF HEAVEN, BUILDS AN ALTAR ON THE HOLY MT. TAI AND OFFERS A SACRIFICE TO THE HEAVENS.
THE RITE TO HEAVEN, CONDUCTED ATOP MT. TAI'S HIGHEST PEAK, IS TERMED THE "FENG" WHILE AN ADDITIONAL RITE TO EARTH, CONDUCTED ATOP THE LESSER PEAK OF LIANGFU, IS TERMED THE "SHAN."

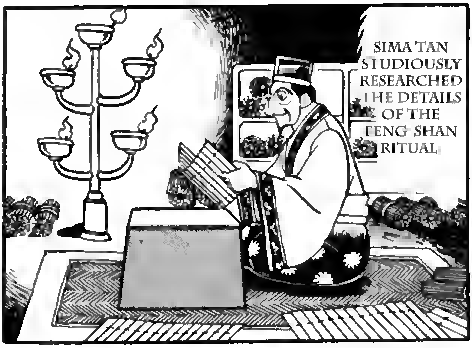

THAT SOUNDS LIKE QUITE THE UNDERTAKING. HOW CAN WE PREPARE FOR IT?
THE EMPEROR REPORTS THE PROSPERITY OF ALL UNDER HEAVEN AND WISHES FOR ITS CONTINUANCE. IT IS ONLY BY CONDUCTING THE FENG-SHAN RITUAL THAT AN EMPEROR IS TRULY ACKNOWLEDGED AS THE SON OF HEAVEN WITH THE HEAVEN'S MANDATE TO RULE ALL THE PEOPLES OF THE REALM.

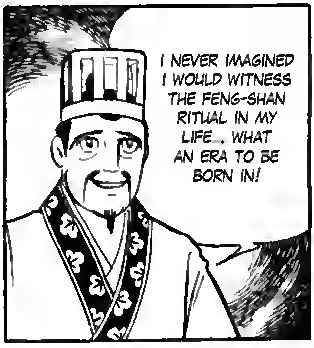
PLEASE GIVE US ANY MORE ADVICE YOU CAN SO THAT WE DO NOT MAKE ANY MISTAKES, SIMA TAN.

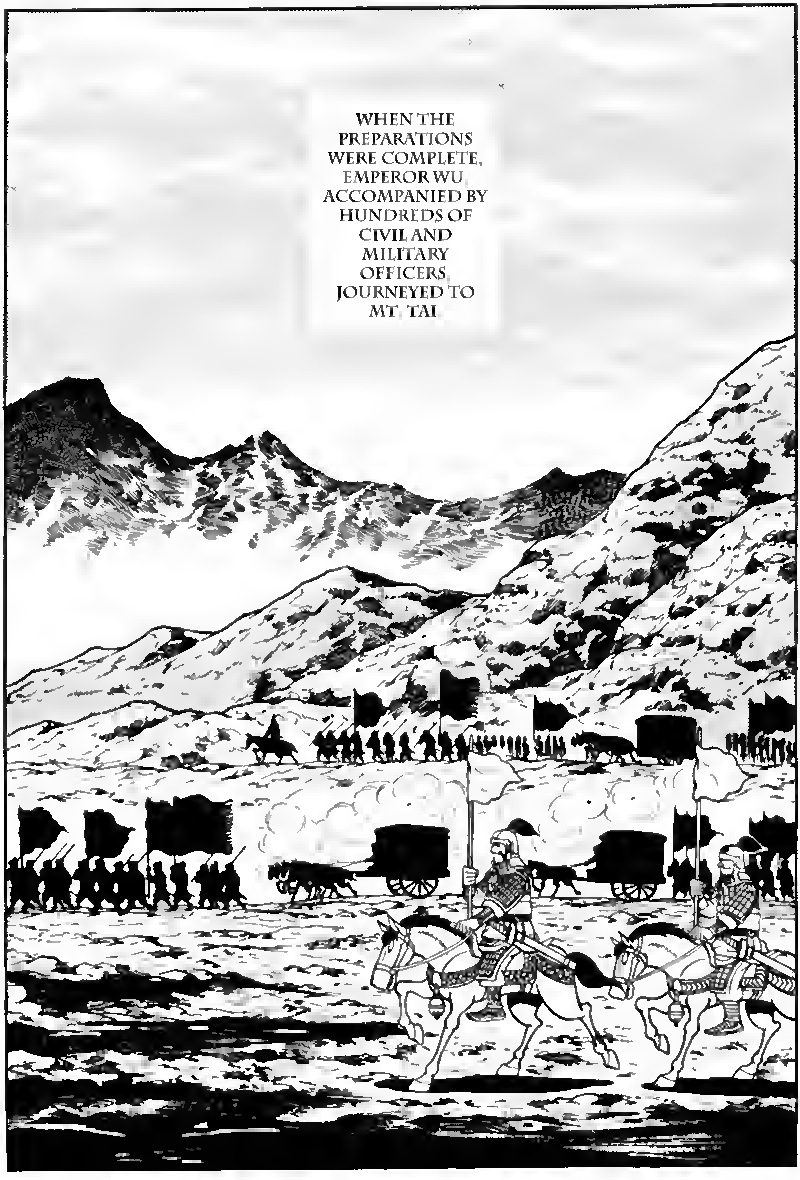
WE MUST GATHER RARE AND VALUABLE ANIMALS ACROSS THE REALM TO OFFER AS SACRIFICES TO HEAVEN.


WE ARE IN A GOLDEN AGE, MY FRIENDS.
TO THINK SUCH A RARE RITUAL WILL BE HELD IN OUR TIMES.! TRULY, THE EMPEROR'S SPLENDOR IS UNPRECEDENTED.

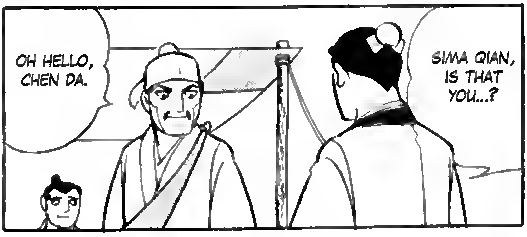
22


SIMA TAN STUDIOUSLY RESEARCHED THE DETAILS OF THE FENG SHAN RITUAL.


I NEVER IMAGINED I WOULD WITNESS THE FENG-SHAN RITUAL IN MY LIFE... WHAT AN ERA TO BE BORN IN!

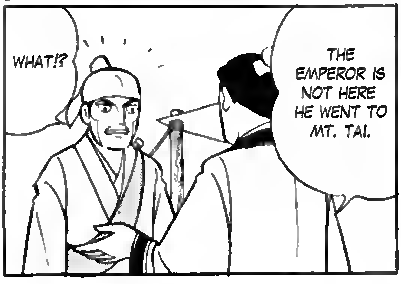

WHEN THE PREPARATIONS WERE COMPLETE, EMPEROR WU, ACCOMPANIED BY HUNDREDS OF CIVIL AND MILITARY OFFICERS, JOURNEYED TO MT. TAI.
23

CHANG'AN

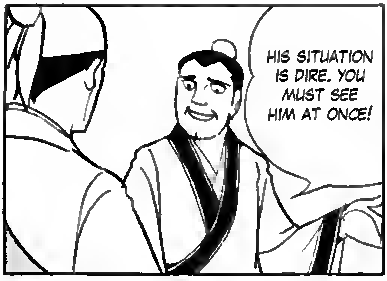

OH HELLO, CHEN DA.
SIMA QIAN, IS THAT YOU...?

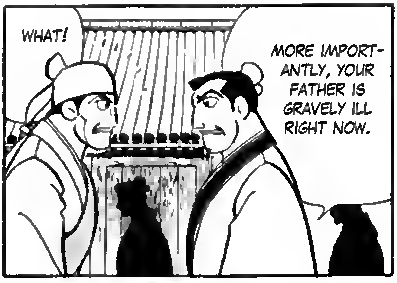
I JUST RETURNED FROM MY INSPECTION OF THE SOUTHWEST-ERN REGIONS.
WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE?

24


WHAT!?
THE EMPEROR IS NOT HERE HE WENT TO MT. TAI.

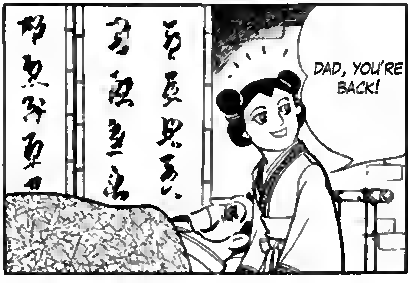
I'M THINKING OF MAKING A REPORT TO THE EMPEROR RIGHT AWAY.


HIS SITUATION IS DIRE. YOU MUST SEE HIM AT ONCE!


WHAT!
MORE IMPORTANTLY, YOUR FATHER IS GRAVELY ILL RIGHT NOW.

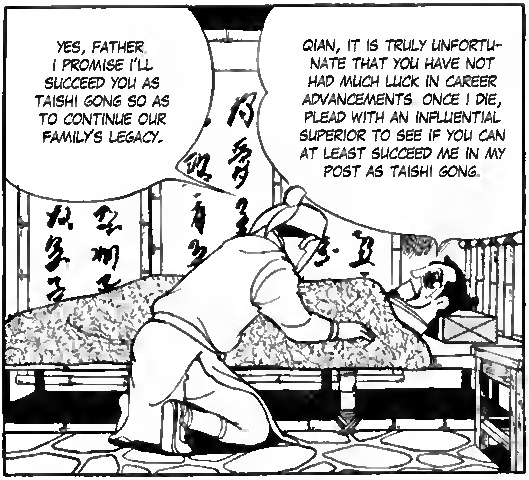
I HAD NO IDEA...

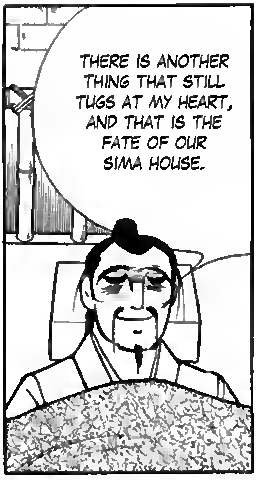
25


DAD, YOU'RE BACK!

FATHER!

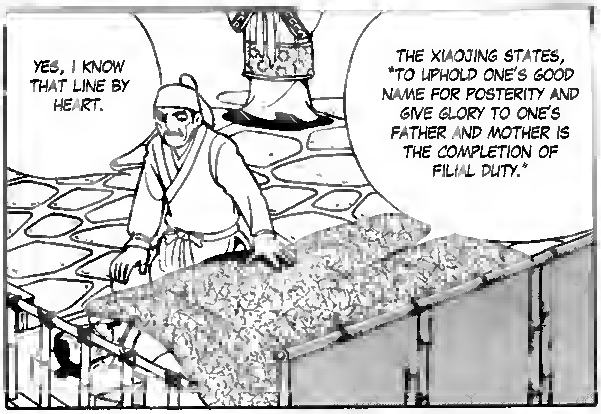
WHO'S THERE..?
HE'S..
HOW'S YOUR GRANDFATHER, MY DAUGHTER?
FATHER, IT'S ME, QIAN. I'VE RETURNED FROM MY INSPECTION TOUR AT LAST.
NO, I KNOW MY BODY BEST.
PLEASE DON'T SPEAK AS IF YOUR DEATH IS IMMINENT, FATHER.
AH... THANK THE HEAVENS FOR LETTING ME MEET YOU ONE MORE TIME BEFORE MY TIME IS UP..
PERHAPS THIS WAS DUE TO ALL THE SLEEPLESS NIGHTS I SPENT IN ORDER TO PREPARE FOR THE FENG-SHAN RITUAL. HOW REGRETTABLE IT IS THAT I CANNOT WITNESS THIS GREAT HISTORICAL EVENT!


QIAN, IT IS TRULY UNFORTUNATE THAT YOU HAVE NOT HAD MUCH LUCK IN CAREER ADVANCEMENTS. ONCE I DIE, PLEAD WITH AN INFLUENTIAL SUPERIOR TO SEE IF YOU CAN AT LEAST SUCCEED ME IN MY POST AS TAISHI GONG.
YES, FATHER. I PROMISE I'LL SUCCEED YOU AS TAISHI GONG SO AS TO CONTINUE OUR FAMILY'S LEGACY.

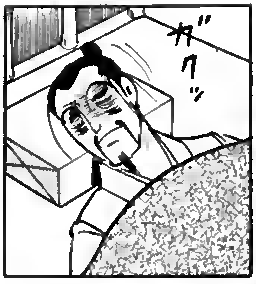

THERE IS ANOTHER THING THAT STILL TUGS AT MY HEART, AND THAT IS THE FATE OF OUR SIMA HOUSE.

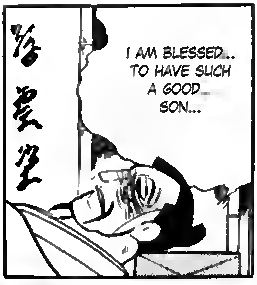
IN THIS WORLD, THERE ARE MANY INTERPRETATIONS OF WHAT CONSTITUTES "FILIAL PIETY." THE FILIAL PIETY THAT I DESIRE FROM YOU IS SUCH AS DICTATED BY THE XIAOJING (CLASSIC OF FILIAL PIETY)...

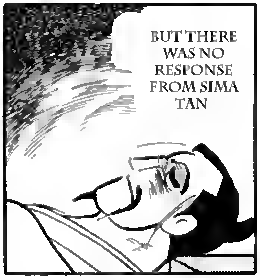
27


THE XIAOJING STATES, "TO UPHOLD ONE'S GOOD NAME FOR POSTERITY AND GIVE GLORY TO ONE'S FATHER AND MOTHER IS THE COMPLETION OF FILIAL DUTY."
YES, I KNOW THAT LINE BY HEART.

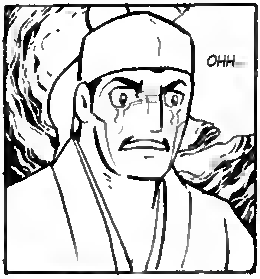
BUT SINCE THEN, THERE HAVE BEEN MANY SAGE RULERS, WISE SCHOLARS, AND LOYAL MINISTERS BUT NO ONE TO RECORD THEIR DEEDS.
HOWEVER, THIS TRADITION HAS SINCE GREATLY ATROPHIED AND IT WASN'T UNTIL CONFUCIUS WHO GAVE IT A NEW BREATH OF LIFE WITH THE CHUNQIU 500 YEARSS AGO.
IT WAS DUE TO DUKE OF ZHOU'S EFFORTS IN WRITING DOWN THE DEEDS OF HIS ANCESTORS THAT THE PEOPLE TODAY WIDELY ADMIRE HIM.
OUR ANCESTORS WERE SCRIBES (TAISHI) FOR THE HOUSE OF ZHOU AND THEY, TOO, RECORDED PAST EVENTS, AS HAVE I.
FOR THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS, I HAVE ATTEMPTED TO RECORD THEIR DEEDS OUT OF THE CONVICTION THAT SUCH RECORDS WOULD BE BENEFICIAL FOR PEOPLE IN NEED OF ROLE MODELS AND TO HELP THEM FIND THE RIGHT PATH IN LIFE...
28
THANK YOU, NOW I CAN REST IN PEACE AT LAST. NEVER FORGET THAT THE MOST FIOUS FILIAL ACT YOU CAN DO IS TO FINISH THIS GREAT WORK SO AS TO RAISE OUR FAMILY'S NAME THROUGHOUT THE AGES...
YES, FATHER. I PROMISE I WILL FINISH YOUR WORK.
ALAS, MY WORK IS YET INCOMPLETE AS MY DEATH DRAWS NEAR! I THUS PLEAD TO YOU TO FINISH MY LIFE'S WORK.



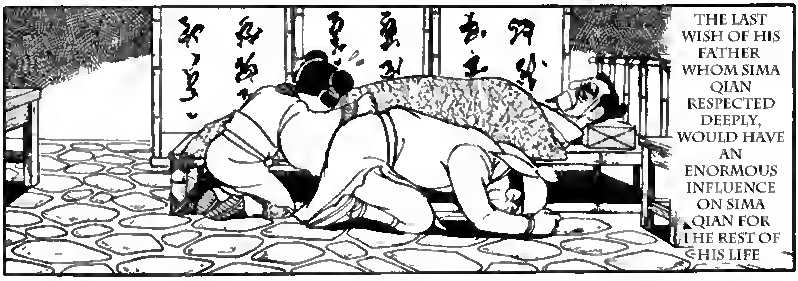

I AM BLESSED... TO HAVE SUCH A GOOD SON...


BUT THERE WAS NO RESPONSE FROM SIMA TAN

GRANDPA!
FATHER!


OHH...

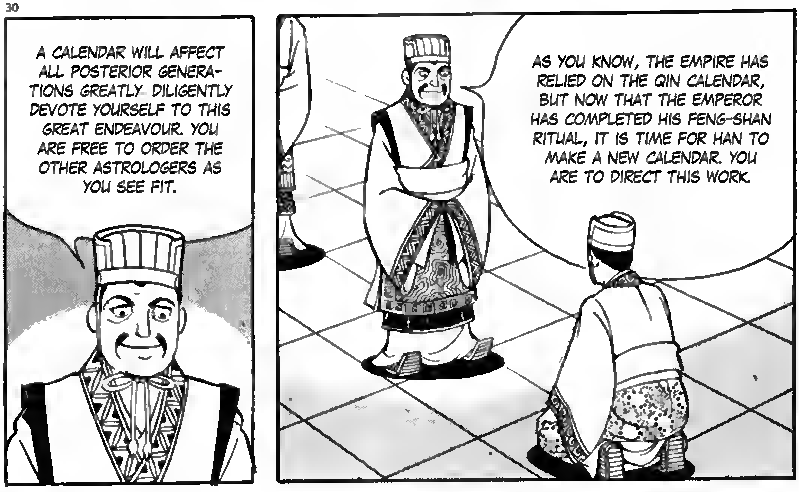
29


THE LAST WISH OF HIS FATHER WHOM SIMA QIAN RESPECTED DEEPLY, WOULD HAVE AN ENORMOUS INFLUENCE ON SIMA QIAN FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE

3RD YEAR OF
YUAN FENG
ERA (108 BC)

THANKS TO THE PULL OF A SUPERIOR SIMA QIAN WAS ABLE TO SECURE THE POST OF TAISHI GONG.

30

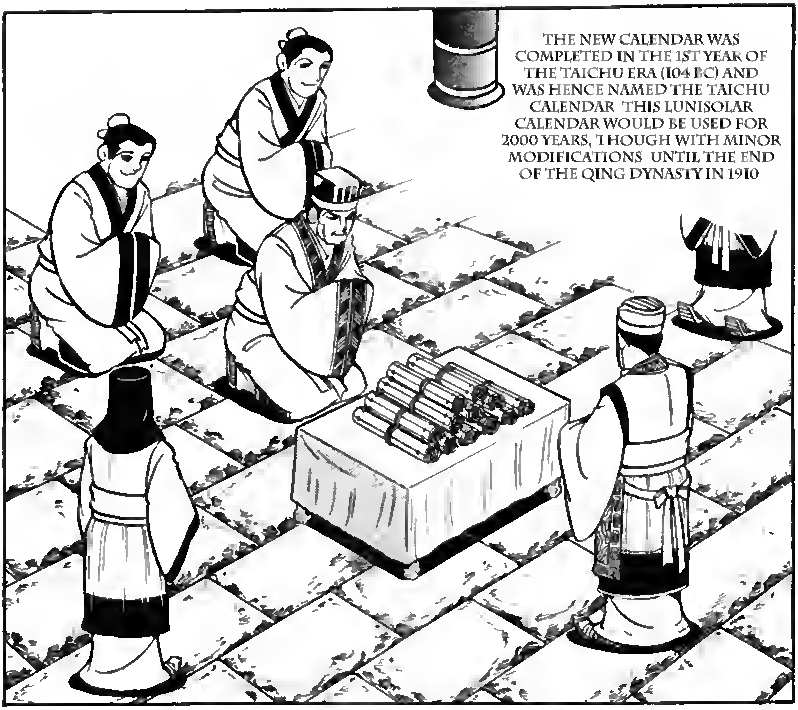

A CALENDAR WILL AFFECT ALL POSTERIOR GENERATIONS GREATLY DILIGENTLY DEVOTE YOURSELF TO THIS GREAT ENDEAVOUR. YOU ARE FREE TO ORDER THE OTHER ASTROLOGERS AS YOU SEE FIT.
AS YOU KNOW, THE EMPIRE HAS RELIED ON THE QIN CALENDAR, BUT NOW THAT THE EMPEROR HAS COMPLETED HIS FENG-SHAN RITUAL, IT IS TIME FOR HAN TO MAKE A NEW CALENDAR. YOU ARE TO DIRECT THIS WORK.

THIS WILL BE QUITE THE UNDERTAKING. I SHOULD TEMPORARILY SET ASIDE COMPLETING MY FATHER'S COMPILATION OF HISTORY.

GATHERING A TEAM OF ASTROLOGERS AND SCRIBES, SIMA QIAN DUTIFULLY SET ABOUT THIS TASK.

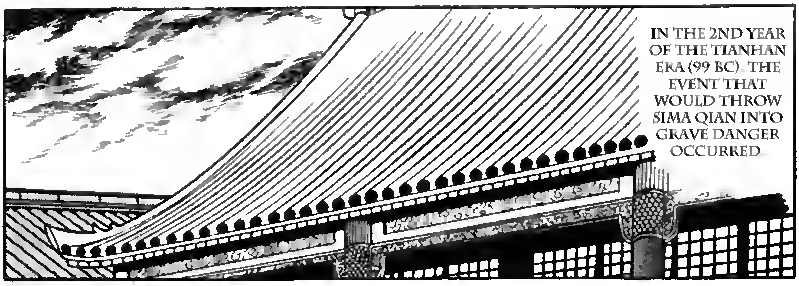
31

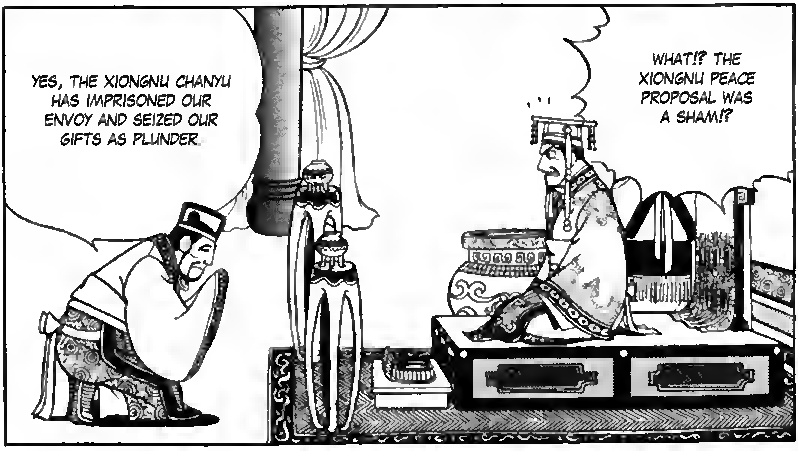
THE QIN CALENDAR WAS A LUNISOLAR CALENDAR IN WHICH A NEW YEAR BEGAN IN THE WINTER WITH THE START OF THE 10TH MONTH. THE NEW CALENDAR THAT SIMA QIAN'S TEAM DEVISED, HOWEVER, WOULD BEGIN THE NEW YEAR IN THE SPRING WITH THE START OF THE 1ST MONTH.


THE NEW CALENDAR WAS COMPLETED IN THE 1ST YEAR OF THE TAICHU ERA (104 BC) AND WAS HENCE NAMED THE TAICHU CALENDAR. THIS LUNISOLAR CALENDAR WOULD BE USED FOR 2000 YEARS, THOUGH WITH MINOR MODIFICATIONS, UNTIL THE END OF THE QING DYNASTY IN 1910

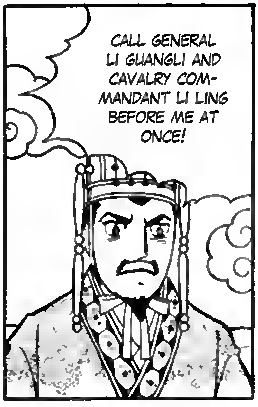
32

HAVING COMPLETED THE CALENDAR SIMA QIAN DEVOTED HIMSELF TO THE WRITING OF HISTORY ONCE MORE

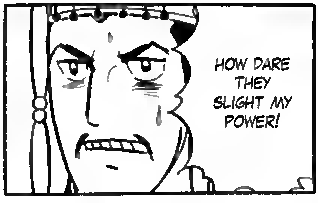

IN THE 2ND YEAR OF THE TIANHAN ERA (99 BC), THE EVENT THAT WOULD THROW SIMA QIAN INTO GRAVE DANGER OCCURRED.


YES, THE XIONGNU CHANYU HAS IMPRISONED OUR ENVOY AND SEIZED OUR GIFTS AS PLUNDER.
WHAT!? THE XIONGNU PEACE PROPOSAL WAS A SHAM!?

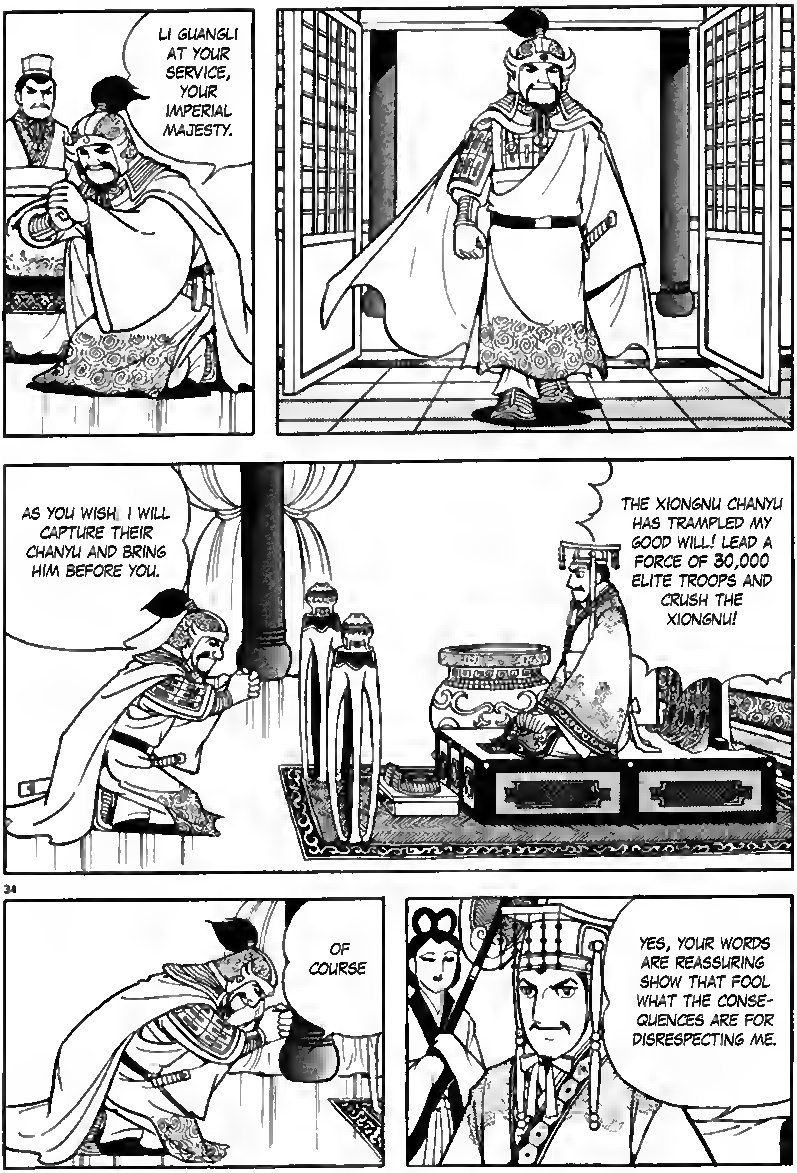
33

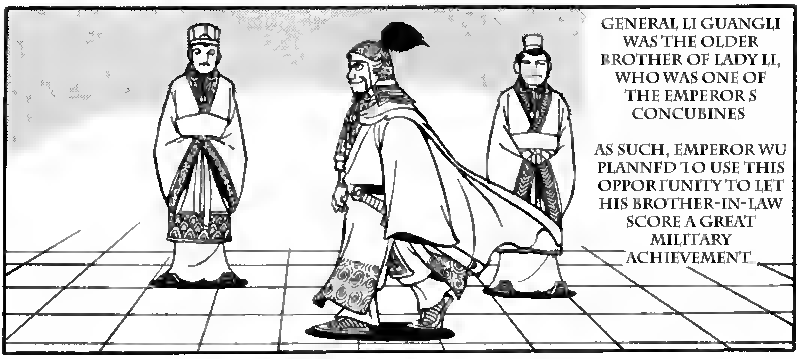

CALL GENERAL LI GUANGLI AND CAVALRY COMMANDANT LI LING BEFORE ME AT ONCE!

YES...

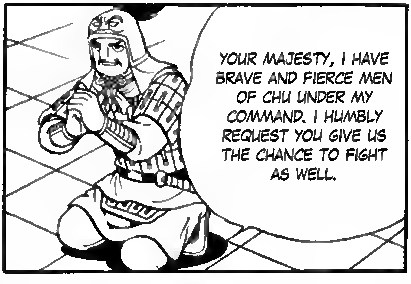

HOW DARE THEY SLIGHT MY POWER!

WEREN'T THEY THE ONES WHO PROPOSED THE PEACE IN THE FIRST PLACE!?

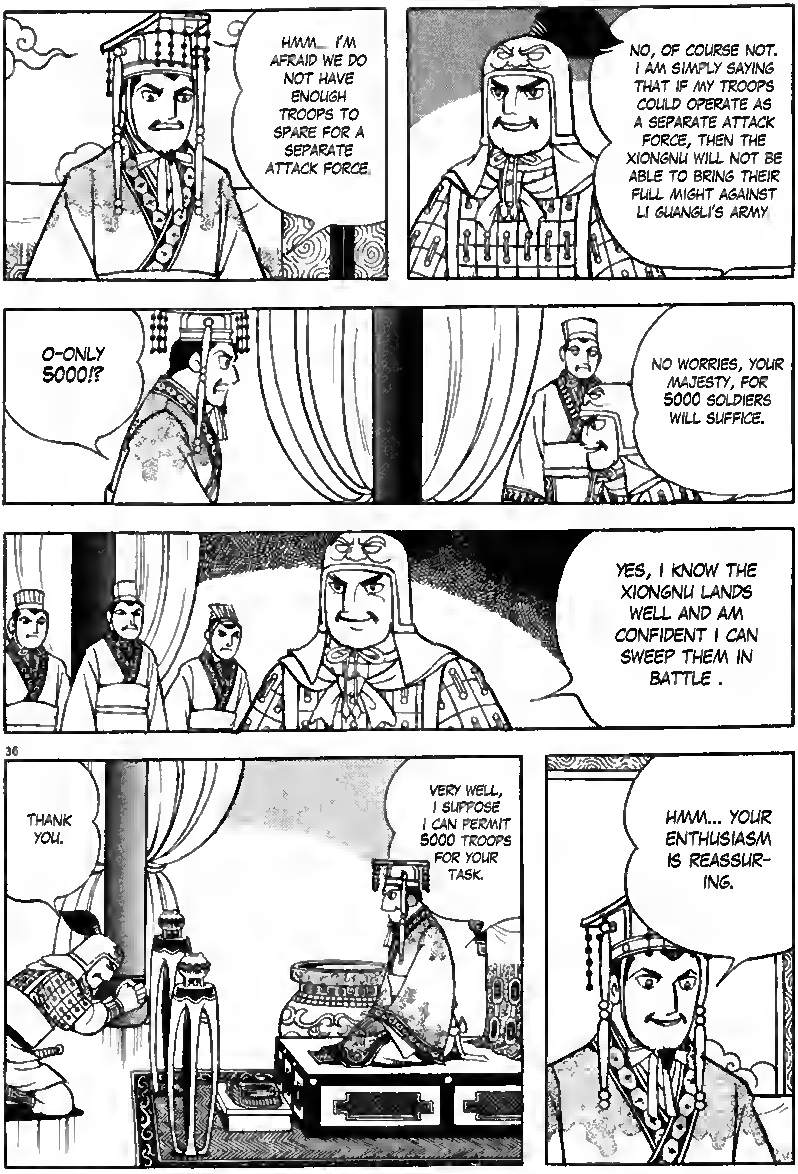

LI GUANGLI AT YOUR SERVICE, YOUR IMPERIAL MAJESTY.
AS YOU WISH. I WILL CAPTURE THEIR CHANYU AND BRING HIM BEFORE YOU.
THE XIONGNU CHANYU HAS TRAMPLED MY GOOD WILL! LEAD A FORCE OF 30,000 ELITE TROOPS AND CRUSH THE XIONGNU!
OF COURSE
YES, YOUR WORDS ARE REASSURING SHOW THAT FOOL WHAT THE CONSEQUENCES ARE FOR DISRESPECTING ME.

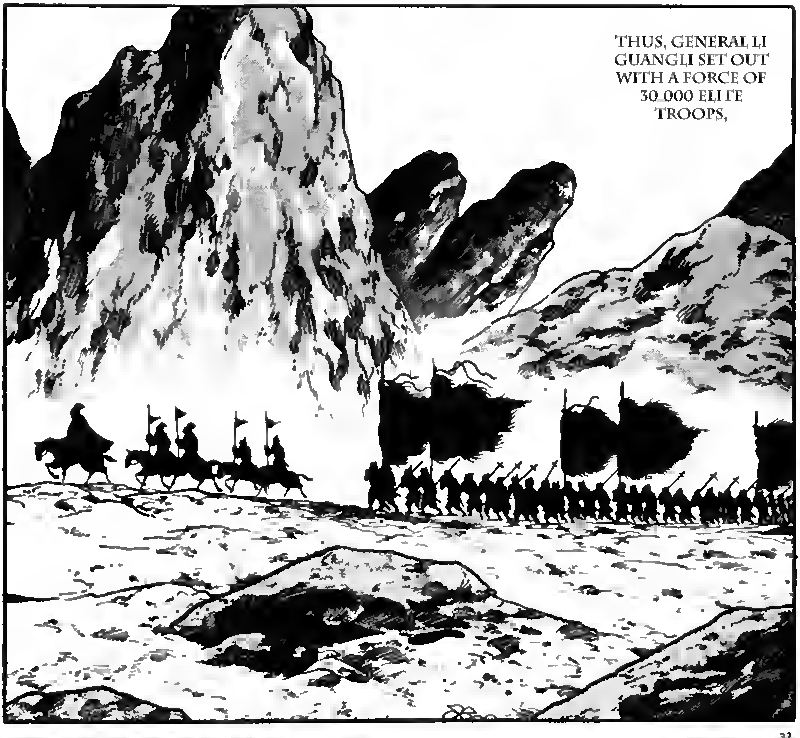

GENERAL LI GUANGLI WAS THE OLDER BROTHER OF LADY LI, WHO WAS ONE OF THE EMPEROR'S CONCUBINES
AS SUCH, EMPEROR WU PLANNED TO USE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO LET HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW SCORE A GREAT MILITARY ACHIEVEMENT

35



*CHU THE SOUTHERN REGION OF CHINA WHICH FORMERLY EXISTED AS AN INDEPENDENT KINGDOM


HMM... I'M AFRAID WE DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH TROOPS TO SPARE FOR A SEPARATE ATTACK FORCE.
NO, OF COURSE NOT. I AM SIMPLY SAYING THAT IF MY TROOPS COULD OPERATE AS A SEPARATE ATTACK FORCE, THEN THE XIONGNU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO BRING THEIR FULL MIGHT AGAINST LI GUANGLI'S ARMY.
O-ONLY 5000!?
NO WORRIES, YOUR MAJESTY, FOR 5000 SOLDIERS WILL SUFFICE.
YES, I KNOW THE XIONGNU LANDS WELL AND AM CONFIDENT I CAN SWEEP THEM IN BATTLE .
36
THANK YOU.
VERY WELL, I SUPPOSE I CAN PERMIT 5000 TROOPS FOR YOUR TASK.
HMM... YOUR ENTHUSIASM IS REASSURING.


THUS, GENERAL LI GUANGLI SET OUT WITH A FORCE OF 30,000 ELITE TROOPS,

37

WHILE LI LING ALSO SET OUT WITH A SEPARATE BODY OF ONLY 5000 TROOPS.
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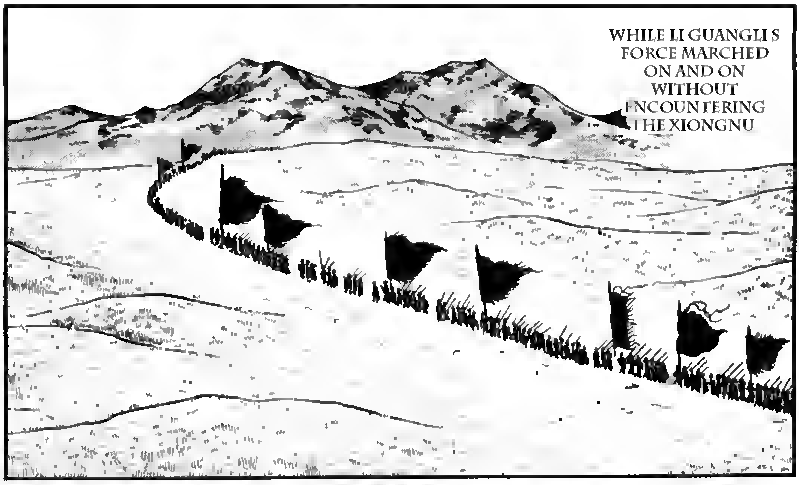
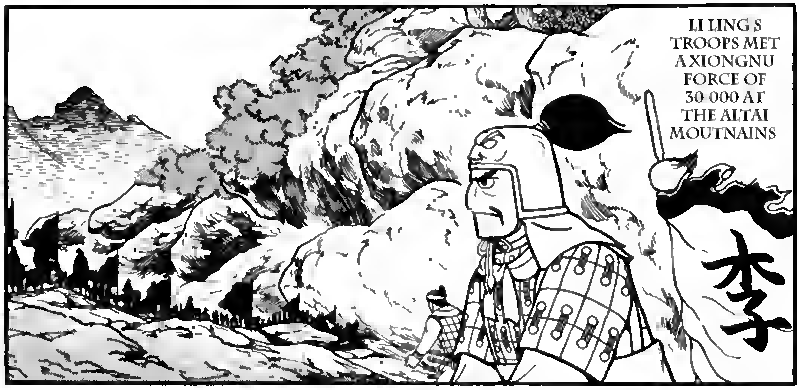

WHILE LI GUANGLI S FORCE MARCHED ON AND ON WITHOUT ENCOUNTERING THE XIONGNU


LI LING S TROOPS MET A XIONGNU FORCE OF 30 000 AT THE ALTAI MOUTNAINS
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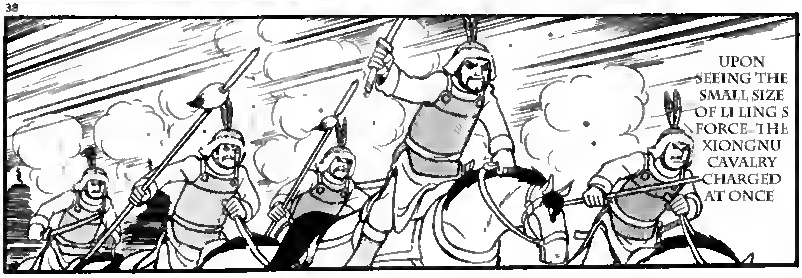
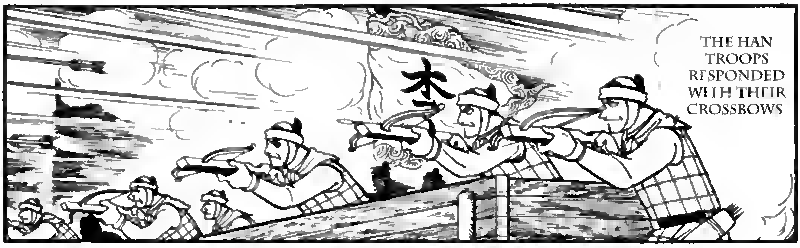

UPON SEEING THE SMALL SIZE OF LI LING S FORCE THE XIONGNU CAVALRY CHARGED AT ONCE


THE HAN TROOPS RESPONDED WITH THEIR CROSSBOWS

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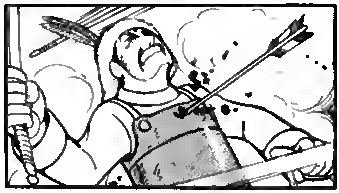
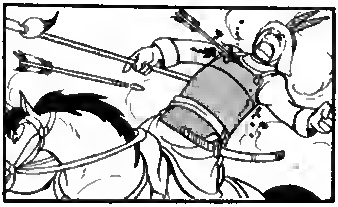
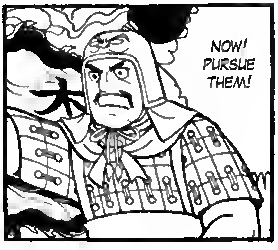




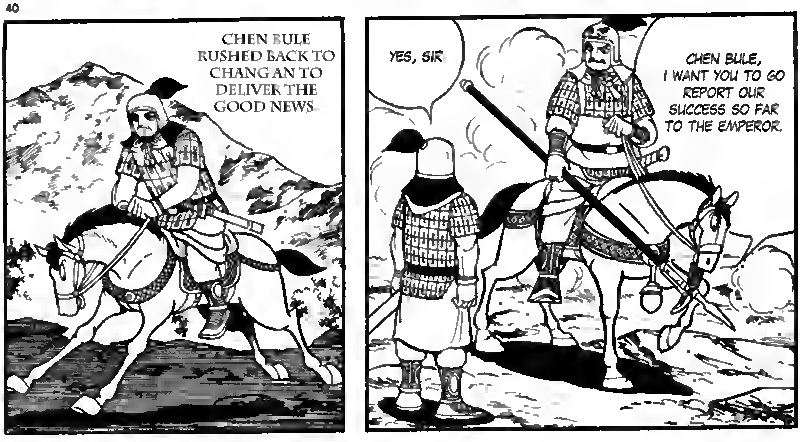
W-WITHDRAW! WITHDRAW!

39

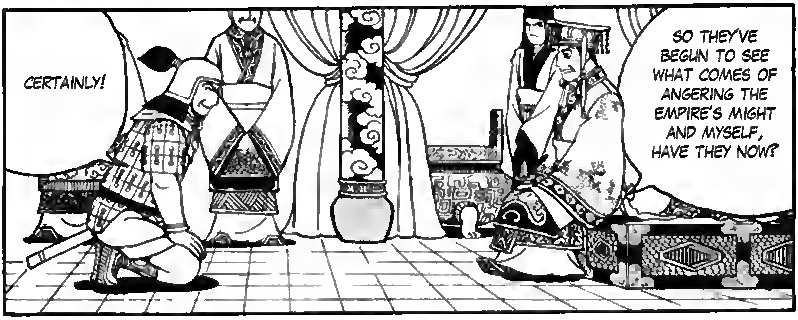

NOW! PURSUE THEM!

SEVERAL THOUSANDS OF XIONGNU WARRIORS WERE KILLED IN THIS FIRST BATTLE

40


CHEN BULE RUSHED BACK TO CHANG'AN TO DELIVER THE GOOD NEWS.
YES, SIR.
CHEN BULE, I WANT YOU TO GO REPORT OUR SUCCESS SO FAR TO THE EMPEROR.

YES, LI LING AND HIS TROOPS NEVER FEARED DEATH AND INSTEAD STRUCK FEAR INTO THE ENEMIES' HEARTS.
HE KILLED SEVERAL THOUSANDS OF XIONGNU WARRIORS IN THE FIRST ENCOUNTER?

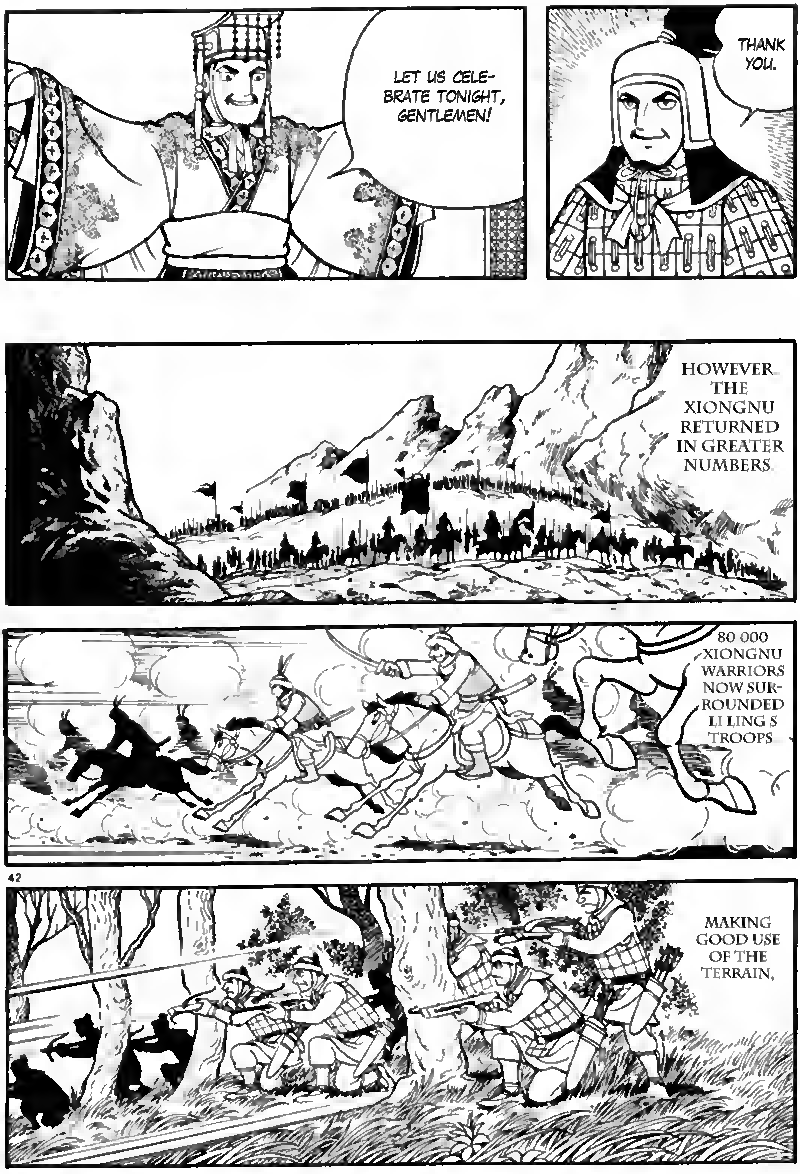

CERTAINLY!
SO THEY'VE BEGUN TO SEE WHAT COMES OF ANGERING THE EMPIRE'S MIGHT AND MYSELF, HAVE THEY NOW?

41

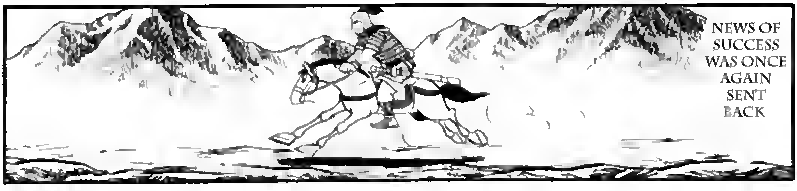
LI LING DOES THE NAME OF HIS GRAND-FATHER PROUD!

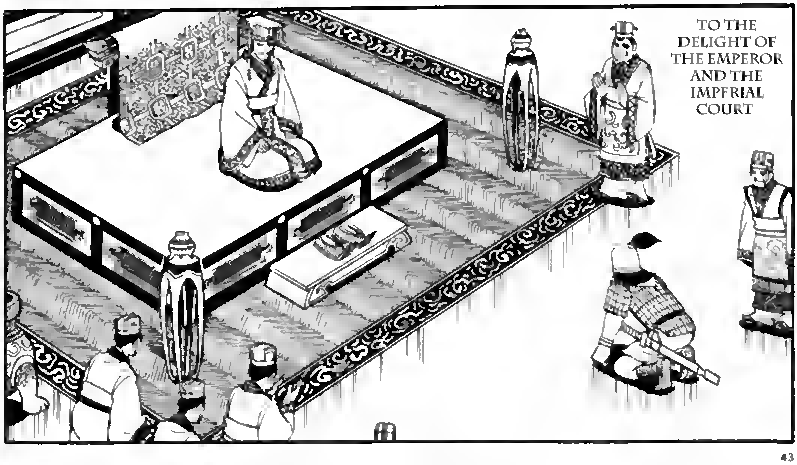
DID YOU ALL HEAR THAT? WHAT EXCELLENT NEWS THIS IS!

THANK YOU FOR DELIVERING THIS GOOD NEWS. IN RETURN, I BESTOW YOU THE TITLE OF LANG (GENTLEMAN).

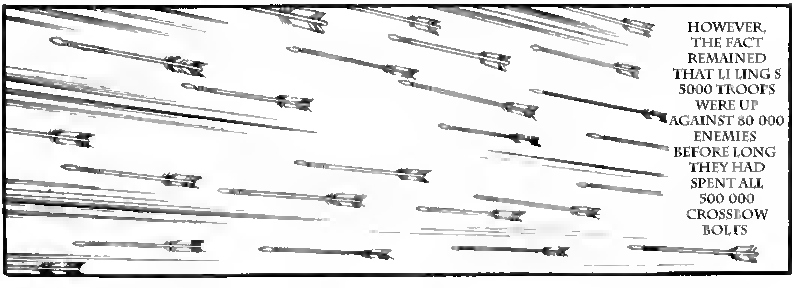

LET US CELEBRATE TONIGHT, GENTLEMEN!
THANK YOU.
HOWEVER, THE XIONGNU RETURNED IN GREATER NUMBERS.
80,000 XIONGNU WARRIORS NOW SURROUNDED LI LING'S TROOPS.
42
MAKING GOOD USE OF THE TERRAIN,

THE HAN TROOPS KILLED 3000 XIONGNU WARRIORS


NEWS OF SUCCESS WAS ONCE AGAIN SENT BACK


TO THE DELIGHT OF THE EMPEROR AND THE IMPERIAL COURT

43


HOWEVER, THE FACT REMAINED THAT LI LING'S 5000 TROOPS WERE UP AGAINST 80 000 ENEMIES BEFORE LONG THEY HAD SPENT ALL 500 000 CROSSBOW BOLTS

LI LING'S TROOPS HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO RESORT TO MELEE COMBAT

NOT SURPRISINGLY, THE OUTNUMBERED TROOPS WERE SLAUGHTERED

44

ALAS, WE NO LONGER HAVE THE SUPPLIES TO CONTINUE THE BATTLE AS SUCH, THE ONLY THING WE CAN DO NOW IS TO TRY AND RETURN HOME.
YOU ALL FOUGHT BRAVELY, MEN IN SPITE OF OUR NUMBERS, YOU GAVE THEM HELL WHICH THEY WON'T SOON FORGET.

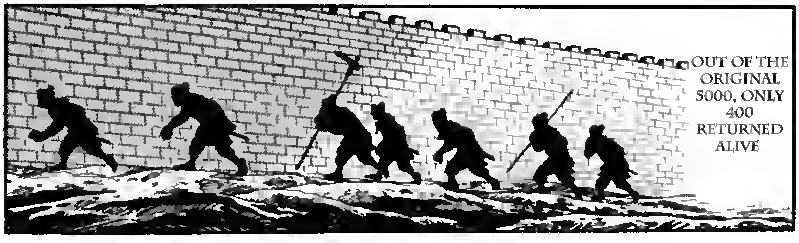
THUS, THE SOLDIERS SCATTERED OFF INTO THE NIGHT

THE SAFEST WAY WOULD BE TO EACH GO OUR OWN WAY SO AS TO AVOID BEING ROUNDED UP BY THE ENEMIES. ANYONE WHO RETURNS HOME ALIVE IS TO REPORT OUR FATE TO THE EMPEROR

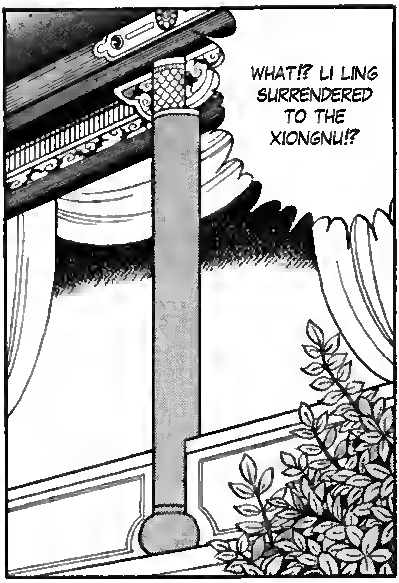
LI LING ONLY HAD 10 OR SO MEN STILL ACCOM-PANYING HIM

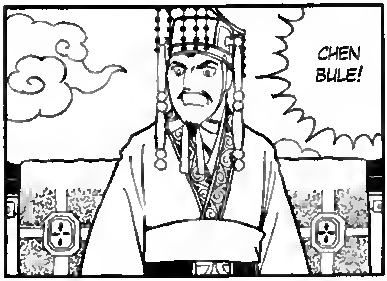
HOWEVER THEY WERE FOUND AND SURROUNDED BY THE XIONGNU TROOPS

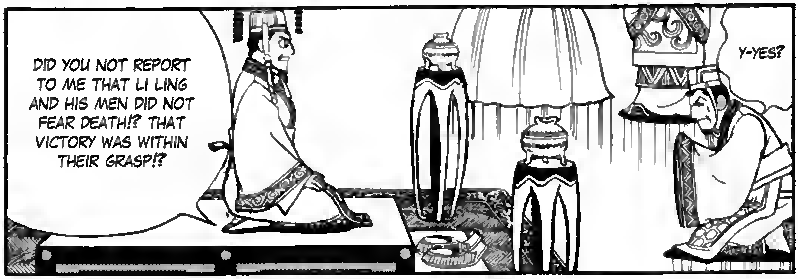
45


OUT OF THE ORIGINAL 5000, ONLY 400 RETURNED ALIVE

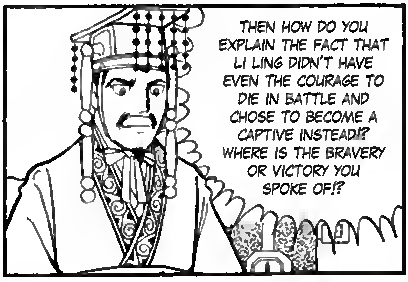
THAT WAS WHAT SOME OF THE SURVIVORS REPORTED.

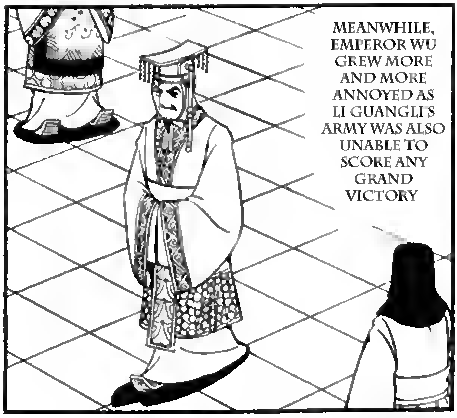

WHAT!? LI LING SURRENDERED TO THE XIONGNU!?

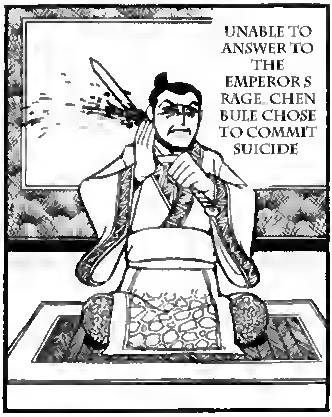

CHEN BULE!

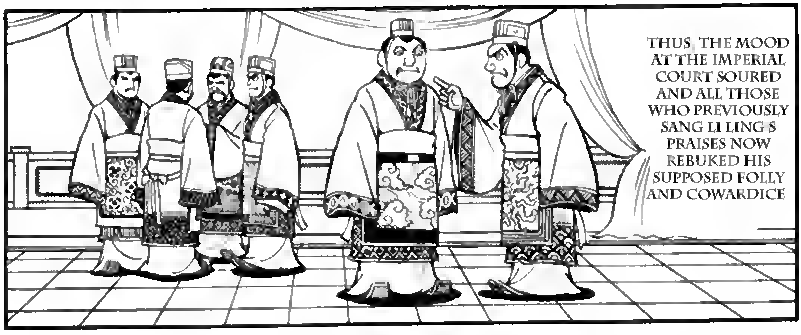

DID YOU NOT REPORT TO ME THAT LI LING AND HIS MEN DID NOT FEAR DEATH!? THAT VICTORY WAS WITHIN THEIR GRASP!?
Y-YES?

UMM... W-WELL...


THEN HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THE FACT THAT LI LING DIDN'T HAVE EVEN THE COURAGE TO DIE IN BATTLE AND CHOSE TO BECOME A CAPTIVE INSTEAD!? WHERE IS THE BRAVERY OR VICTORY YOU SPOKE OF!?


MEANWHILE, EMPEROR WU GREW MORE AND MORE ANNOYED AS LI GUANGLI'S ARMY WAS ALSO UNABLE TO SCORE ANY GRAND VICTORY


UNABLE TO ANSWER TO THE EMPEROR'S RAGE, CHEN BULE CHOSE TO COMMIT SUICIDE

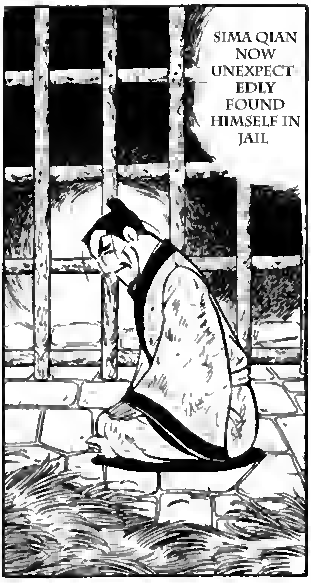

THUS, THE MOOD AT THE IMPERIAL COURT SOURED AND ALL THOSE WHO PREVIOUSLY SANG LI LING'S PRAISES NOW REBUKED HIS SUPPOSED FOLLY AND COWARDICE

SIMA QIAN, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF LI LING? WAS HE SIMPLY AN IMPATIENT FOOL RUSHING FOR GLORY OR SOMETHING WORSE...?

I HEARD THAT WHEN HIS TROOPS RAN OUT OF ARROWS, THEY EVEN CHARGED WITH NOTHING MORE THAN DAGGERS OR SHORT-SWORDS. HOW MANY OTHER GENERALS WOULD HAVE LET SO MANY OF HIS TROOPS FIGHT TO THEIR DEATHS EVEN WHEN THE SITUATION HAD LONG TURNED HOPELESS?
I DO NOT THINK HE WAS A SIMPLE-MINDED WARRIOR DESPITE BEING SURROUNDED BY AN ENEMY FORCE OF 80,000, HE AND HIS 5000 TROOPS FOUGHT VALIANTLY AND KILLED MANY THOUSANDS.

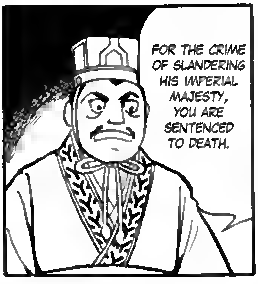
WHAT!?
I THINK IT IS RATHER INAPPROPRIATE THAT MEN IN COMFORTABLE LUXURY SO EASILY CRITCIZE HOW THOSE BRAVING DEATH ON THE BATTLEFIELD SHOULD OR SHOULD NOT HAVE ACTED. HAD LI LING RECEIVED EVEN 10,000 TROOPS TO REINFORCE HIM, HE WOULD HAVE SURELY ROUTED THE ENEMIES.
NO, OF COURSE NOT, YOUR MAJESTY! I SIMPLY THINK THAT LI LING'S COURAGE WAS GENUINE AND PERHAPS HE ONLY CHOSE TO SURRENDER BECAUSE HE BELIEVED HE COULD LATER FIND AN OPPORTUNITY TO ESCAPE FROM ENEMY CAPTIVITY.
IS THAT SUPPOSED TO PUT THE BLAME ON MY HANDS FOR NOT SENDING HIM REINFORCE-MENTS!?
N-NO, I IMPLY NO SUCH THINGS!
SILENCE! IT WAS LI LING WHO FOOLISHLY ASKED PERMISSION TO ACT AS A SEPARATE FORCE WITH ONLY 5000 TROOPS! ARE YOU IMPLYING THAT LI GUANGLI WAS NOT FIT TO LEAD THE MAIN ARMY AND THAT LI LING SHOULD HAVE BEEN HANDED COMMAND INSTEAD!? OR DO YOU SUPPORT LI LING FOR SOME OTHER SINISTER INTENTIONS!?
LOCK THIS IMPUDENT FOOL UP!

THERE THE JAILERS WHIPPED THE PRISONERS WITHOUT RESTRAINT

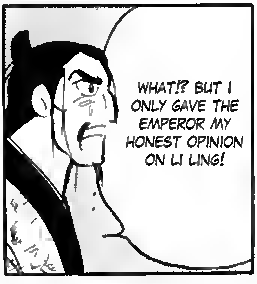

SIMA QIAN NOW UNEXPECTEDLY FOUND HIMSELF IN JAIL

WITH EACH LASH, SIMA QIAN FELT HIS DIGNITY ERODE

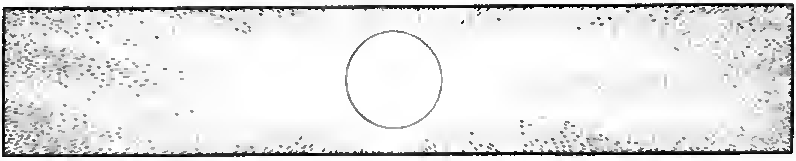
49

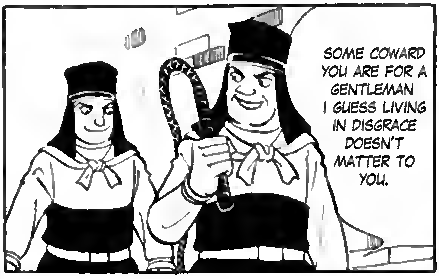

FOR THE CRIME OF SLANDERING HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY, YOU ARE SENTENCED TO DEATH.

YOUR SENTENCE HAS BEEN DECIDED


WHAT!? BUT I ONLY GAVE THE EMPEROR MY HONEST OPINION ON LI LING!

T-THAT'S ABSURD..!
SILENCE! YOUR REMARK WAS CLEARLY INTENDED TO DISPARAGE GENERAL LI GUANGLI, AND BY EXTENSION, THE IMPERIAL FAMILY AS WELL!
DEATH FOR SIMPLY SPEAKING IN FAVOUR OF LI LING...?
AS YOU'RE LIKELY AWARE, THERE ARE TWO OPTIONS FOR A MAN TO AVOID THE DEATH PENALTY. EITHER PAY THE EXEMPTION FEE OF 500,000 CASH OR SUBJECT YOURSELF TO THE PALACE PUNISHMENT (CASTRATION). YOU HAVE 10 DAYS TO DECIDE SO THINK CAREFULLY.
I DO NOT FEAR DEATH AND WOULD GLADLY COMMIT SUICIDE TO PRESERVE MY HONOUR, BUT THAT WOULD MEAN THE END OF THE SIMA HOUSE.
THERE'S NO WAY I CAN AFFORD 500,000 CASH WITH MY SALARY...
50
FATHER... TELL ME... WHAT SHOULD I DO...?





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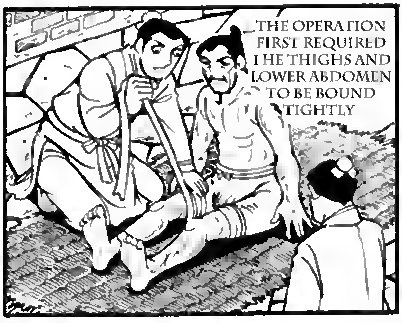
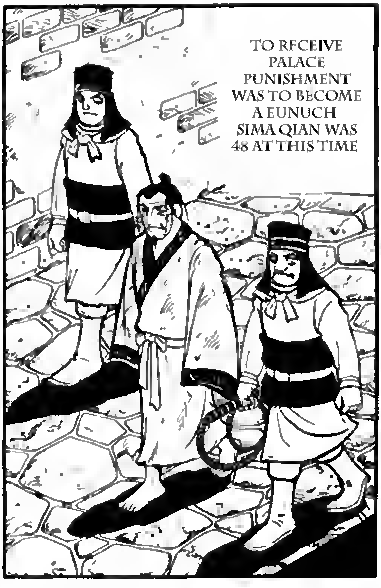
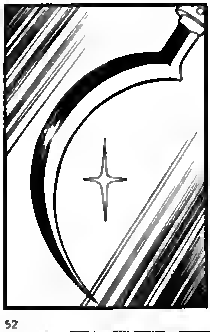
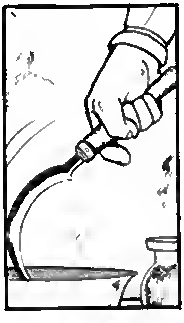
AFTER AGONIZING OVER THE ISSUE, SIMA QIAN CHOSE TO SUFFER A LIFE OF DISGRACE AND HUMILIATION TO KEEP THE PROMISE TO HIS FATHER AND FULFILL HIS FILIAL DUTY


THE OPERATION FIRST REQUIRED THE THIGHS AND LOWER ABDOMEN TO BE BOUND TIGHTLY

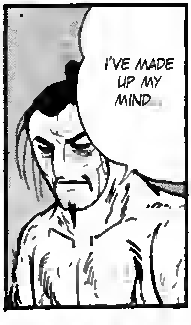

TO RECEIVE PALACE PUNISHMENT WAS TO BECOME A EUNUCH SIMA QIAN WAS 48 AT THIS TIME

YOU'RE GONNA BE IN A WORLD OF PAIN UNTIL THE WOUND HEALS MANY WOULD CONSIDER DEATH FAR MORE PREFERABLE DO YOU STILL WISH TO PROCEED?

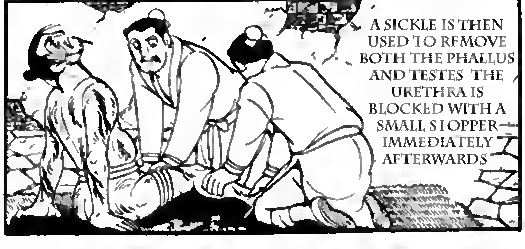


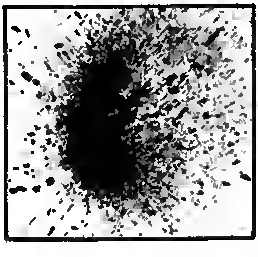


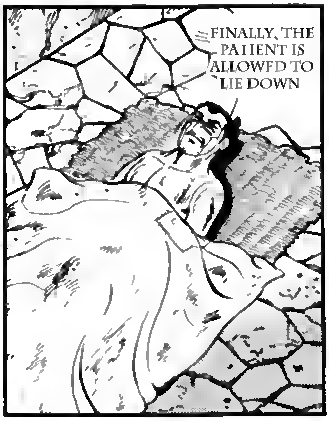
FINE.


I'VE MADE UP MY MIND

52

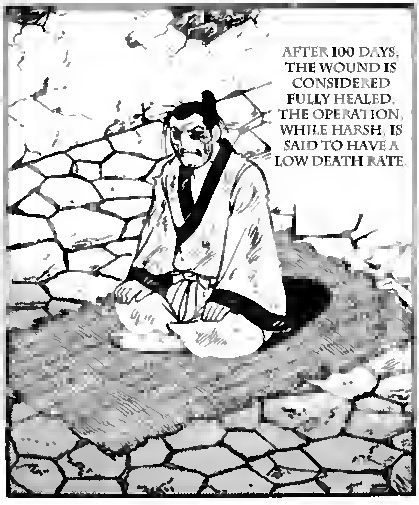

A SICKLE IS THEN USED TO REMOVE BOTH THE PHALLUS AND TESTES THE URETHRA IS BLOCKED WITH A SMALL STOPPER IMMEDIATELY AFTERWARDS

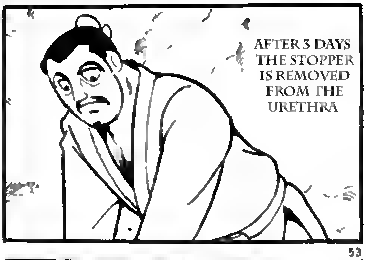



FINALLY, THE PATIENT IS ALLOWED TO LIE DOWN

THE PATIENT IS THEN MADE TO WALK AROUND FOR 2-3 HOURS BY THE SURGEONS

FOR 3 DAYS AFTER THE OPERATION THE PATIENT IS ALLOWED NEITHER FOOD NOR WATER. THE HELLISH COMBINATION OF HUNGER, THIRST AND PAIN CAUSED SIMA QIAN TO WRITHE VIOLENTLY


AFTER 100 DAYS, THE WOUND IS CONSIDERED FULLY HEALED. THE OPERATION, WHILE HARSH, IS SAID TO HAVE A LOW DEATH RATE.


AFTER 3 DAYS THE STOPPER IS REMOVED FROM THE URETHRA

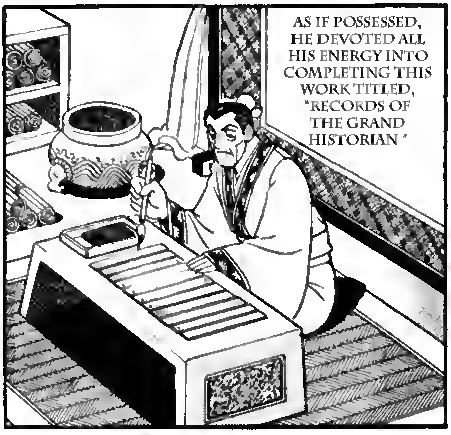
53

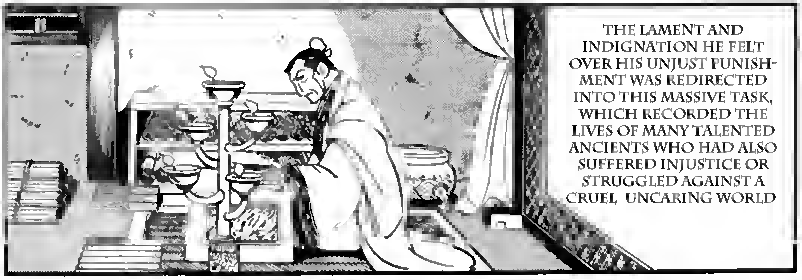
AT WHICH POINT THE STORED URINE SPURTS FORTH LIKE A FOUNTAIN

EMPEROR WU HAD SINCE COME TO REGRET HIS HARSH REACTION TO SIMA QIAN'S COMMENT
IN SPITE OF EVERYTHING, I STILL DO RECOGNIZE THAT MAN'S TALENTS. IS THERE SOME SUITABLE POST I CAN GIVE HIM?
HE SURVIVED THE PALACE SENTENCE JUST FINE.
HOW IS SIMA QIAN DOING .?
HE CAN BE MADE AN OFFICIAL IN CHARGE OF ORGANIZING AND WRITING PALACE DOCUMENTS AND EDICTS,
WHY NOT CREATE A NEW POST TO MAKE BEST USE OF HIS TALENTS THEN?
AH, GOOD IDEA!
UNDER THE TITLE OF "PREFECT OF PALACE WRITERS."*

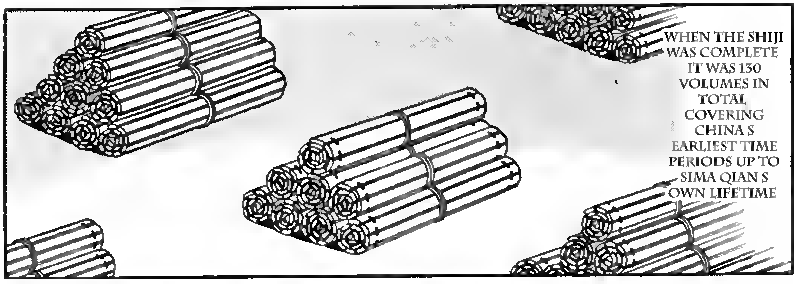
*ZHONGSHULING (中書令) SOMETIMES ALTERNATIVELY TRANSLATED AS IMPERIAL SECRETARIAT, DIRECTOR OF SCRIBES, GRAND SCRIBE, ETC.

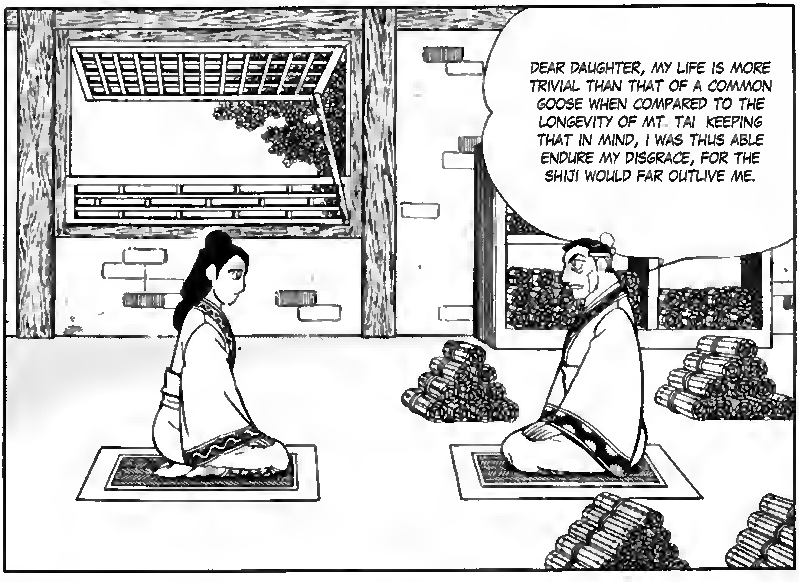
IT WAS THE PERFECT RESOURCE FOR HIM TO COMPLETE HIS HISTORY COMPILATION
SIMA QIAN GLADLY ACCEPTED THIS NEW POST AS IT ALLOWED HIM TO FREELY ACCESS THE IMPERIAL ARCHIVES

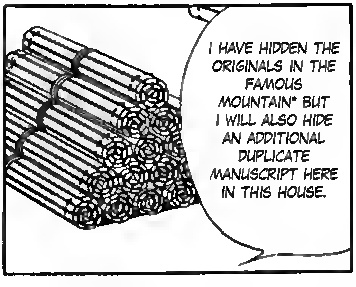


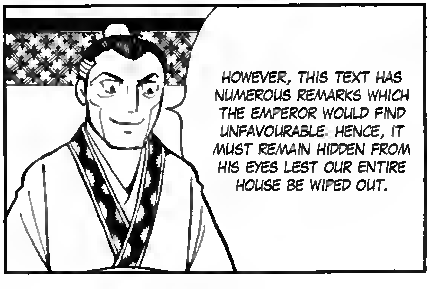

THE LAMENT AND INDIGNATION HE FELT OVER HIS UNJUST PUNISHMENT WAS REDIRECTED INTO THIS MASSIVE TASK, WHICH RECORDED THE LIVES OF MANY TALENTED ANCIENTS WHO HAD ALSO SUFFERED INJUSTICE OR STRUGGLED AGAINST A CRUEL, UNCARING WORLD

*TAISHI GONGSHU (RECORDS OF THE GRAND HISTORIAN/SCRIBE)IS USUALLY REFERRED TO AS SHIJI (THE SCRIBE S RECORD)


WHEN THE SHIJI WAS COMPLETE IT WAS 130 VOLUMES IN TOTAL COVERING CHINA'S EARLIEST TIME PERIODS UP TO SIMA QIAN'S OWN LIFETIME


DEAR DAUGHTER, MY LIFE IS MORE TRIVIAL THAN THAT OF A COMMON GOOSE WHEN COMPARED TO THE LONGEVITY OF MT. TAI. KEEPING THAT IN MIND, I WAS THUS ABLE ENDURE MY DISGRACE, FOR THE SHIJI WOULD FAR OUTLIVE ME.


I HAVE HIDDEN THE ORIGINALS IN THE FAMOUS MOUNTAIN* BUT I WILL ALSO HIDE AN ADDITIONAL DUPLICATE MANUSCRIPT HERE IN THIS HOUSE.

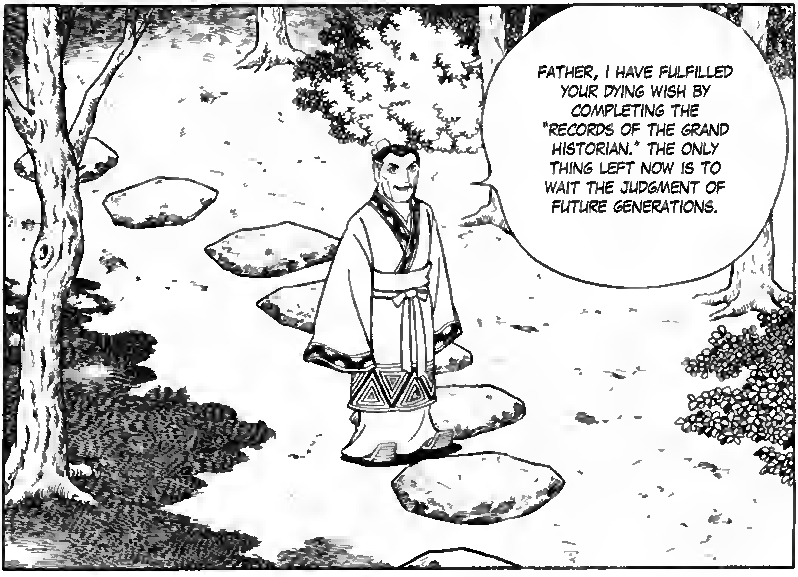

HOWEVER, THIS TEXT HAS NUMEROUS REMARKS WHICH THE EMPEROR WOULD FIND UNFAVOURABLE. HENCE, IT MUST REMAIN HIDDEN FROM HIS EYES LEST OUR ENTIRE HOUSE BE WIPED OUT.

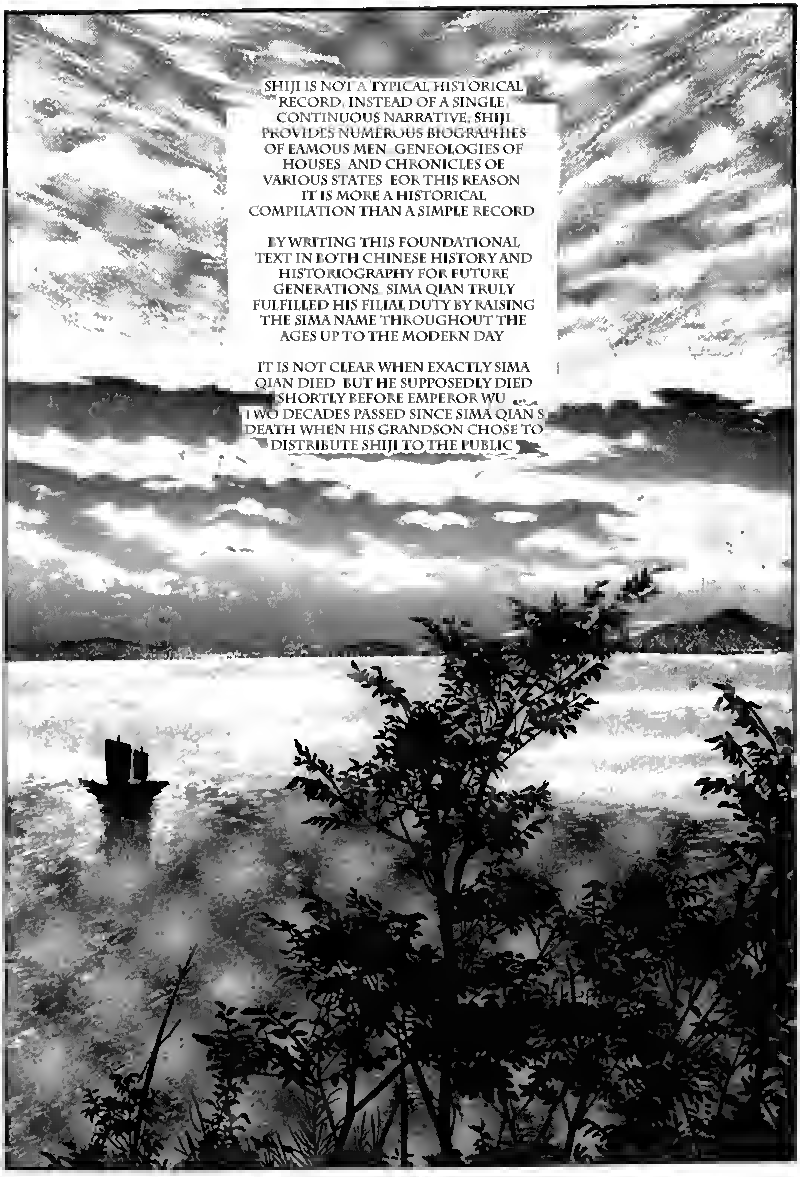
*IT'S UNCLEAR WHICH PLACE THIS REFERS TO. IT COULD BE ONE OF THE NUMEROUS FAMOUS MOUNTAINS OF CHINA SUCH AS MT. TAI, OR EVEN A REFERENCE TO HIS HOMETOWN.

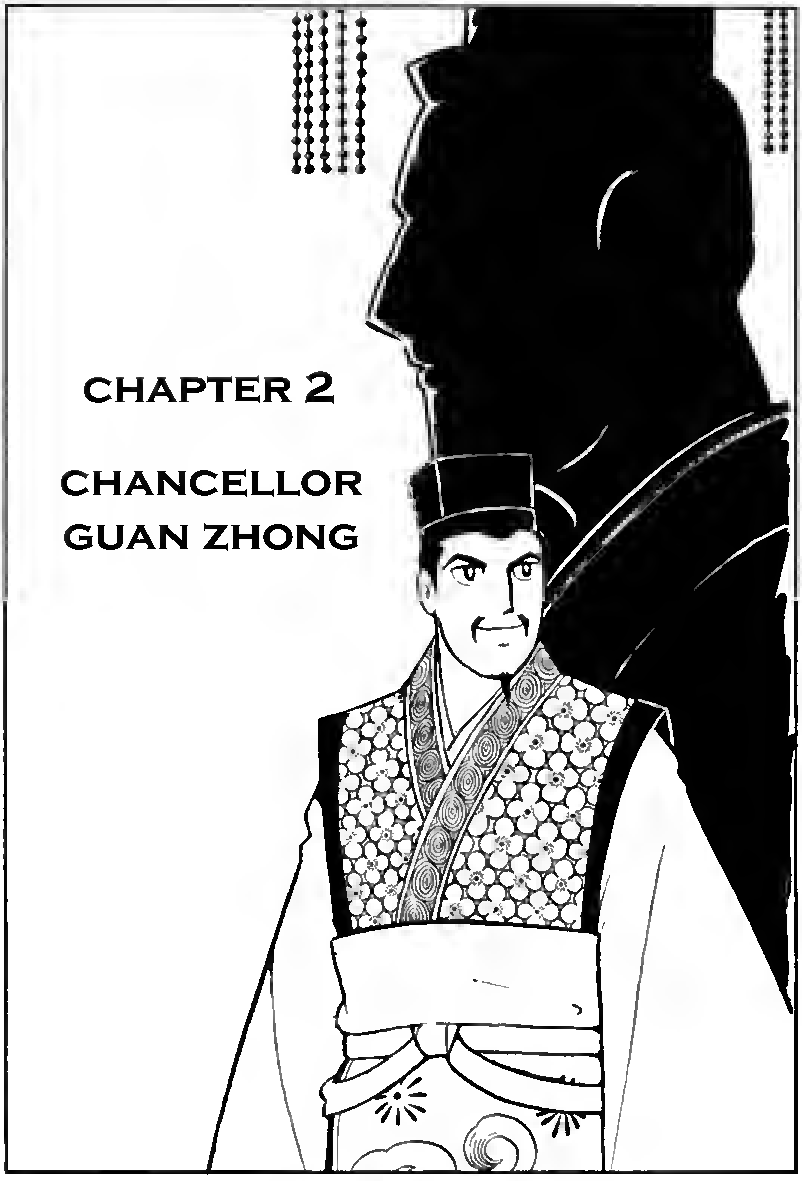
WHAT AN ARDUOUS DECADE IT HAS BEEN... BUT AT LAST, I CAN DIE WITHOUT REGRETS.

YES, FATHER.
BY DOING SO, I AM BETTING THAT POSTERIOR GENERATIONS WILL RECOGNIZE ITS TRUE VALUE

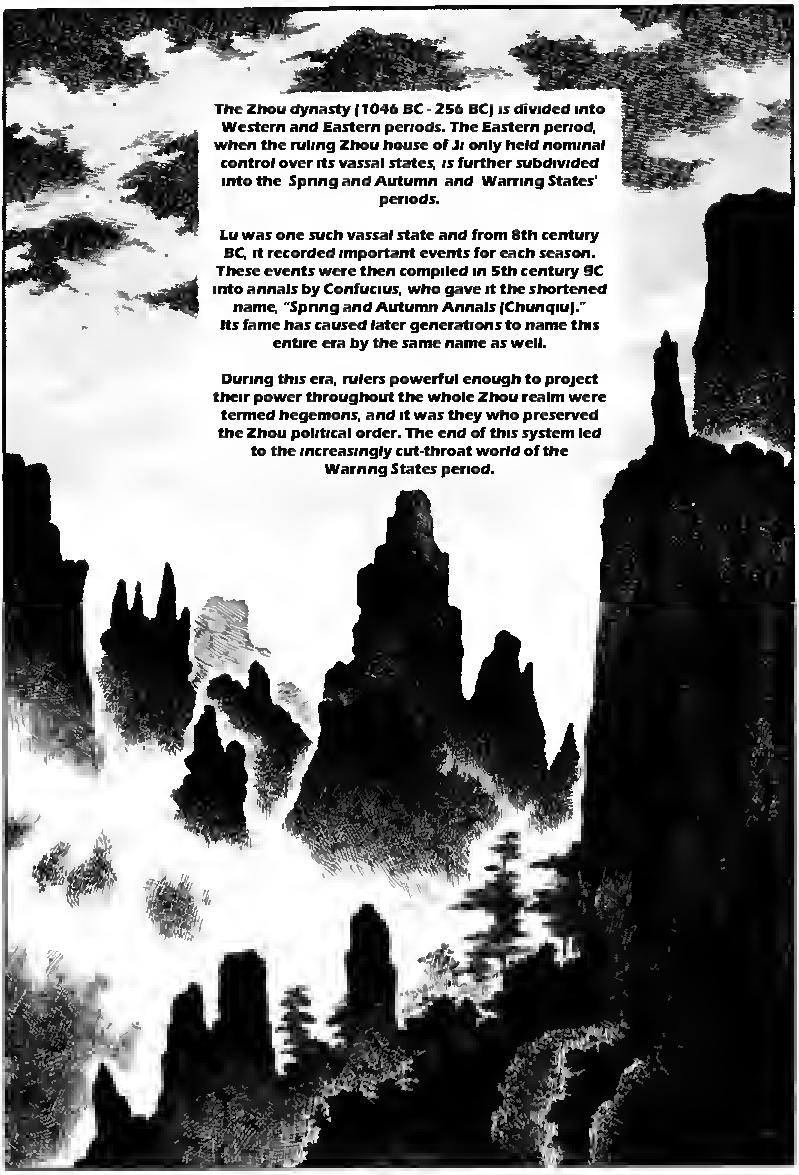
57


FATHER, I HAVE FULFILLED YOUR DYING WISH BY COMPLETING THE "RECORDS OF THE GRAND HISTORIAN." THE ONLY THING LEFT NOW IS TO WAIT THE JUDGMENT OF FUTURE GENERATIONS.


SHIJI IS NOT A TYPICAL HISTORICAL RECORD. INSTEAD OF A SINGLE, CONTINUOUS NARRATIVE, SHIJI PROVIDES NUMEROUS BIOGRAPHIES OF FAMOUS MEN, GENEOLOGIES OF HOUSES, AND CHRONICLES OE VARIOUS STATES. EOR THIS KEASON IT IS MORE A HISTORICAL COMPILATION THAN A SIMPLE RECORD
BY WRITING THIS FOUNDATIONAL TEXT IN BOTH CHINESE HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS, SIMA QIAN TRULY FULFILLED HIS FILIAL DUTY BY RAISING THE SIMA NAME THKOUGHOUT THE AGES UP TO THE MODEKN DAY
IT IS NOT CLEAR WHEN EXACTLY SIMA QIAN DIED. BUT HE SUPPOSEDLY DIED SHORTLY BEFORE EMPEROR WU. TWO DECADES PASSED SINCE SIMA QIAN'S DEATH WHEN HIS GRANDSON CHOSE TO DISTRIBUTE SHIJI TO THE PUBLIC


CHAPTER 2
CHANCELLOR
GUAN ZHONG

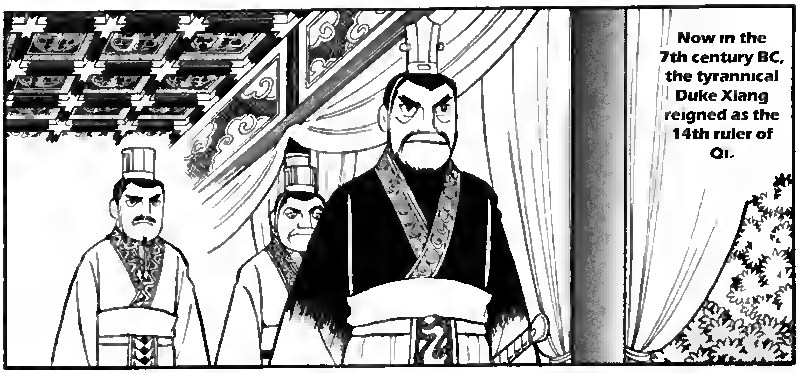
HEGEMON (霸/BA): TITLE WHICH LITERALLY MEANS, "SENIOR ONE."
THE HEGEMON ORDER IS ALSO ALTERNATIVELY KNOWN AS THE "BA SYSTEM."


The Zhou dynasty (1046 BC - 256 BC) is divided into Western and Eastern periods. The Eastern period, when the ruling Zhou house of Ji only held nominal control over its vassal states, is further subdivided into the Spring and Autumn and Warring States' periods.
Lu was one such vassal state and from 8th century BC, it recorded important events for each season. These events were then compiled in 5th century BC into annals by Confucius, who gave it the shortened name, "Spring and Autumn Annals (Chunqiu)." Its fame has caused later generations to name this entire era by the same name as well.
During this era, rulers powerful enough to project their power throughout the whole Zhou realm were termed hegemons, and it was they who preserved the Zhou political order. The end of this system led to the increasingly cut-throat world of the Warring States period.

The first hegemon was Duke Huan of Qi. Qi was the duchy that the famous Lu Shang (11th century BC) had been enfeoffed with for his critical role in defeating the Shang dynasty to aid the establishment of the Zhou dynasty.

Legend has it that King Wen of Zhou first met Lu Shang fishing, and the latter's patience convinced him that Lu Shang was the sage he had been searching for. The military treatise, "Six Secret Teachings," is also traditionally attributed to Lu Shang and he is thus also known as one of the fathers of Chinese military strategy.

MAJOR STATES OF THE SPRING AND AUTUMN PERIOD

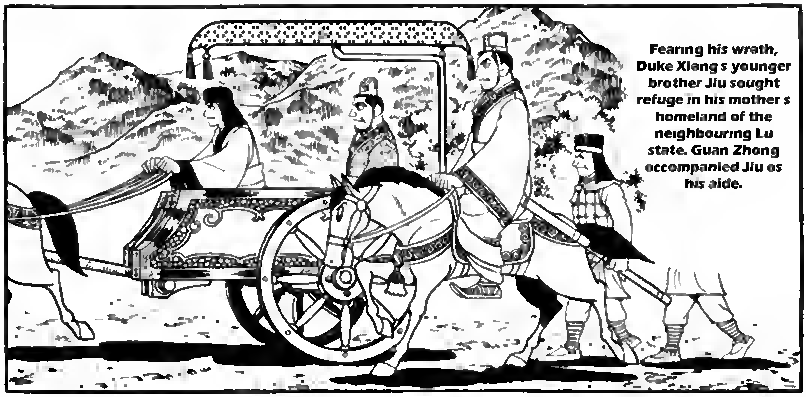

Now in the 7th century BC, the tyrannical Duke Xiang reigned as the 14th ruler of Qi.

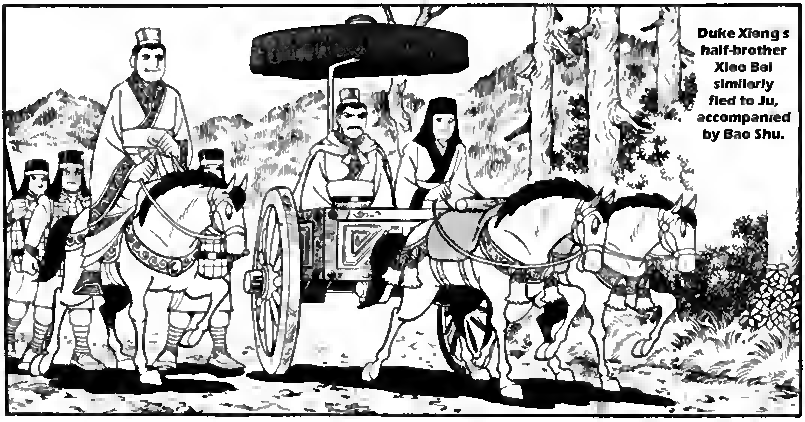
He would lay hands upon any woman he saw without restraint.

Any who dared criticize him

Were swiftly beheaded

And imprison those he disliked.

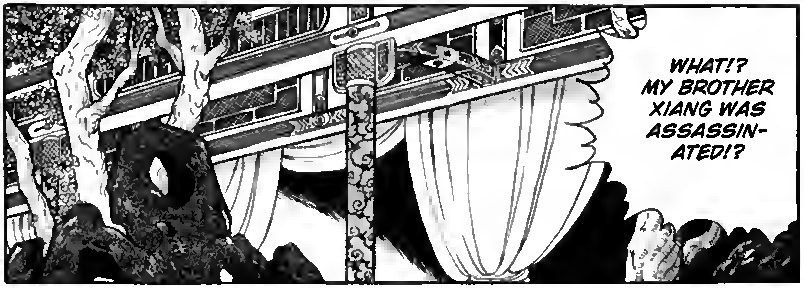

Fearing his wrath, Duke Xiang's younger brother Jiu sought refuge in his mother's homeland of the neighbouring Lu state. Guan Zhong accompanied Jiu as his aide.


Duke Xiang's half-brother Xiao Bai similarly fled to Ju, accompanied by Bao Shu.

5

Guan Zhong and Bao Shu were good friends since childhood and as adults would often discuss their futures with drinks.

Lu


WHAT!? MY BROTHER XIANG WAS ASSASSIN-ATED!?

6

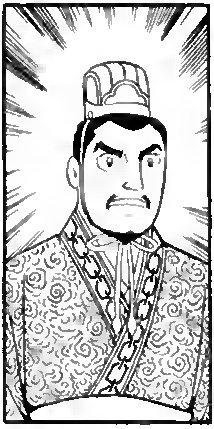
BY HIS COUSIN, WUZHI, SIR.
BY WHO!?

HE NAMED HIMSELF THE NEW RULER OF QI.

WUZHI...!? SO WHAT HAPPENED THEN?

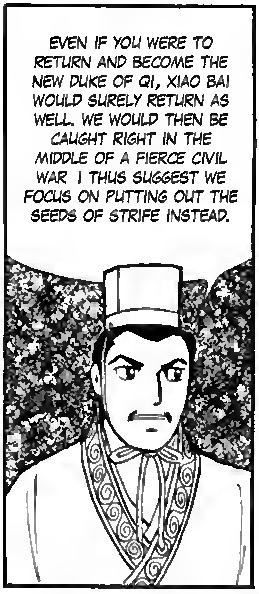
HOWEVER, HE, TOO, WAS KILLED BY YONGLIN'S TROOPS SHORTLY AFTER

THE MEN SUPPORTING YOU THUS URGENTLY REQUEST YOUR RETURN TO QI.



HENCE, QI IS CURRENTLY DIVIDED BETWEEN TWO FACTIONS. ONE SUPPORTING YOU AS THE NEXT DUKE, THE OTHER SUPPORTING XIAO BAI.

YES, SIR.
THANK YOU FOR INFORMING ME YOU MAY EXCUSE YOURSELF NOW.


EVEN IF YOU WERE TO RETURN AND BECOME THE NEW DUKE OF QI, XIAO BAI WOULD SURELY RETURN AS WELL. WE WOULD THEN BE CAUGHT RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF A FIERCE CIVIL WAR. I THUS SUGGEST WE FOCUS ON PUTTING OUT THE SEEDS OF STRIFE INSTEAD.

NO, I ADVISE WAITING, SIR.
GUAN ZHONG, WE BETTER RETURN TO QI AT ONCE.

8

SINCE XIAO BAI IS LIKELY HURRYING BACK TO QI RIGHT NOW, I PROPOSE AMBUSHING HIM ALONG THE WAY.
PUTTING OUT THE SEEDS OF STRIFE..?

HESITATE NOW AND YOU WILL SOON FIND YOURSELF SHARING WUZHI'S FATE, SIR.
BUT...

...RIGHT!
I'LL ASK TO BORROW LU TROOPS. JUST LEAVE IT TO ME, SIR.

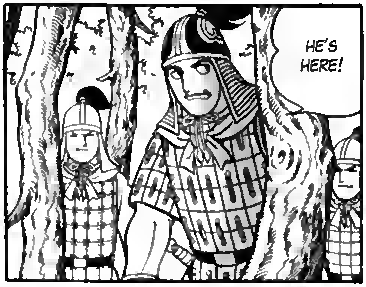
C... CAN WE PULL IT OFF?

Guan Zhong explained the situation to Duke Zhuang of Lu,

9

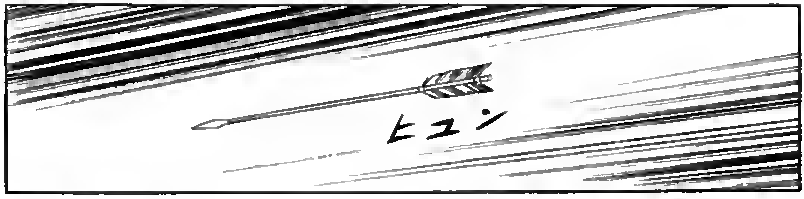
And successfully obtained soldiers needed for the task.

YES, SIR!
LISTEN, THE ONLY MAN WE NEED TO KILL IS THE ONE IN THE CHARIOT. IGNORE THE REST!


HE'S HERE!

10

I'LL TRY TO SHOOT HIM FIRST. ONLY IF I MISS WILL YOU THEN SHOOT ARROWS.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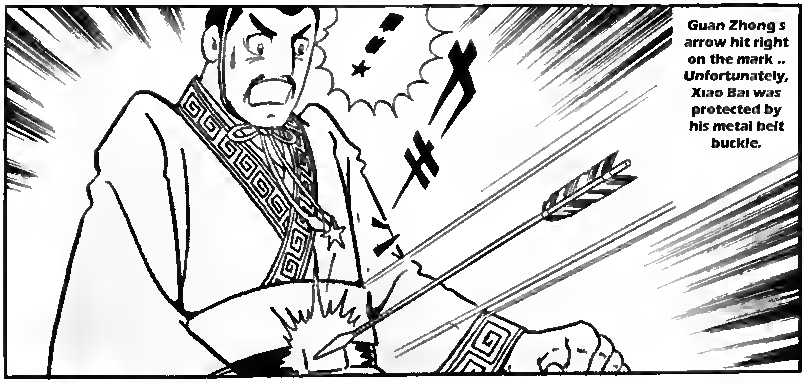
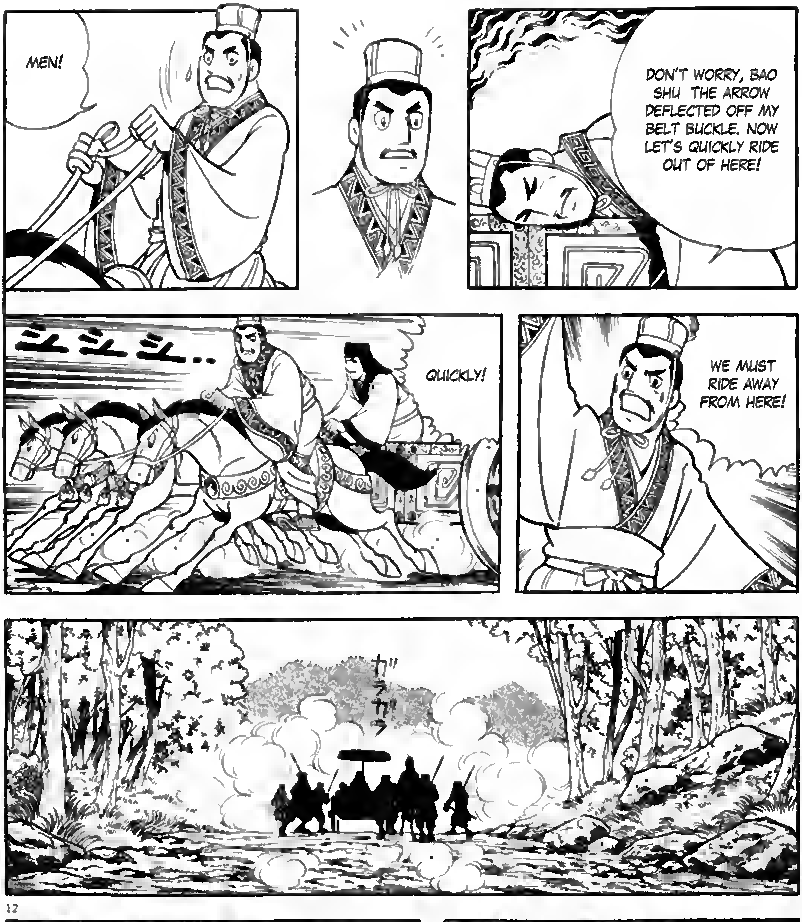

Guan Zhong s arrow hit right on the mark .. Unfortunately, Xiao Bai was protected by his metal belt buckle.

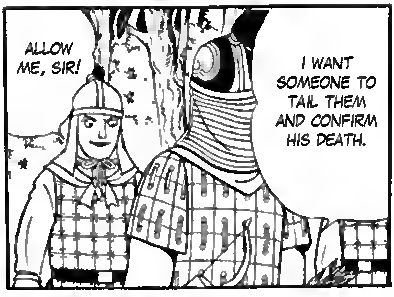
AGHHH!

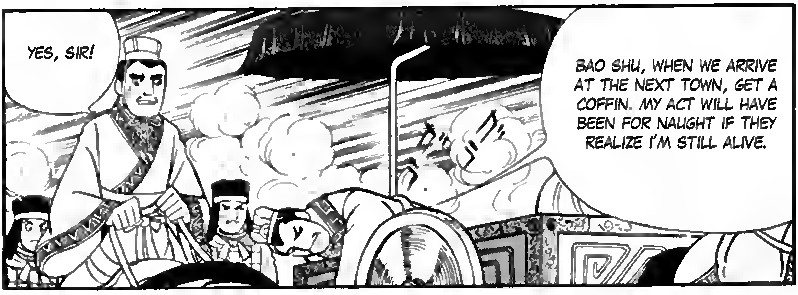
Xiao Bai immediately feigned death.

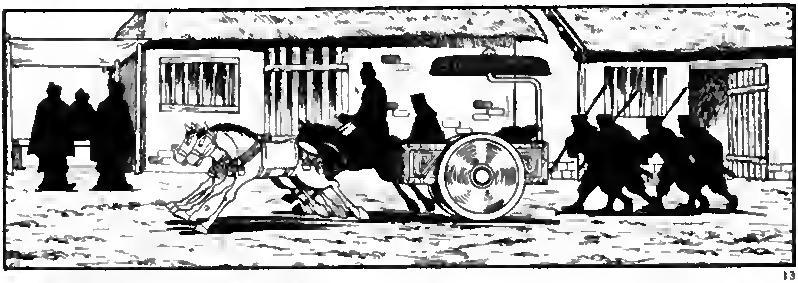
11

PRINCE XIAO BAI!

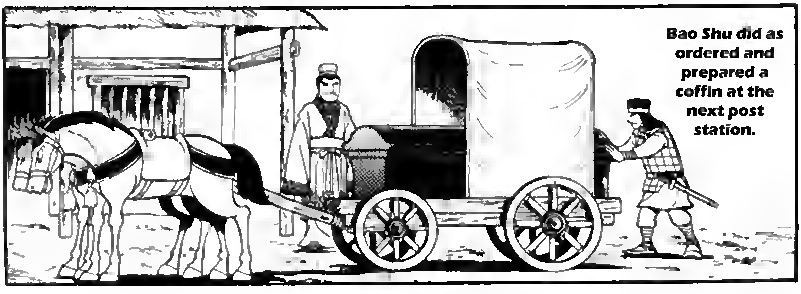

MEN!
DON'T WORRY, BAO SHU. THE ARROW DEFLECTED OFF MY BELT BUCKLE. NOW LET'S QUICKLY RIDE OUT OF HERE!
シュシュシュ..
QUICKLY!
WE MUST RIDE AWAY FROM HERE!
カラカラ
YES, I CLEARLY SAW HIM DIE WITH MY OWN TWO EYES JUST NOW!
DO YOU THINK XIAO BAI IS DEAD?

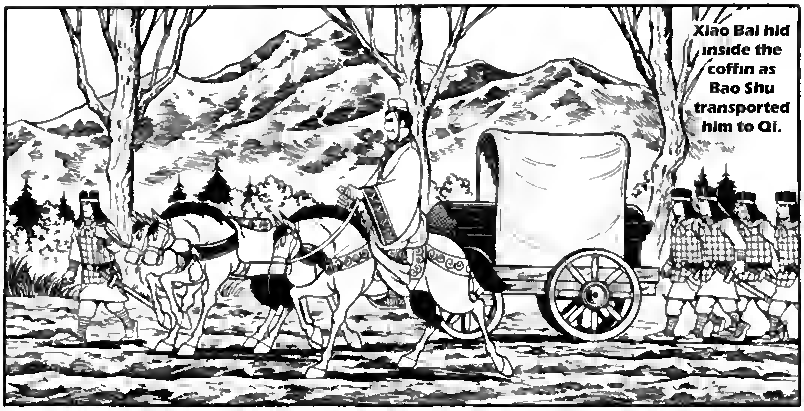

ALLOW ME, SIR!
I WANT SOMEONE TO TAIL THEM AND CONFIRM HIS DEATH.

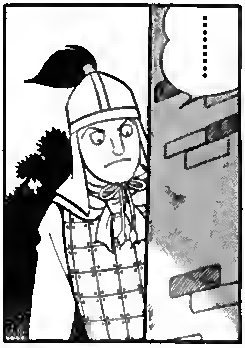

YES, SIR!
BAO SHU, WHEN WE ARRIVE AT THE NEXT TOWN, GET A COFFIN. MY ACT WILL HAVE BEEN FOR NAUGHT IF THEY REALIZE I'M STILL ALIVE.



13

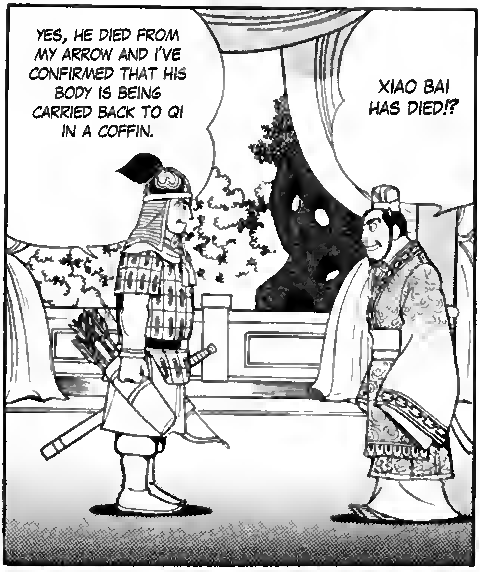

Bao Shu did as ordered and prepared a coffin at the next post station.

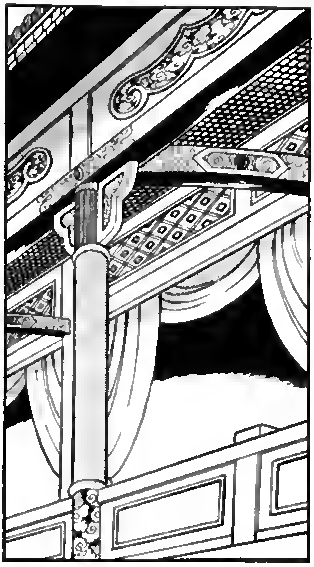

Xiao Bai hid inside the coffin as Bao Shu transported him to Qi.



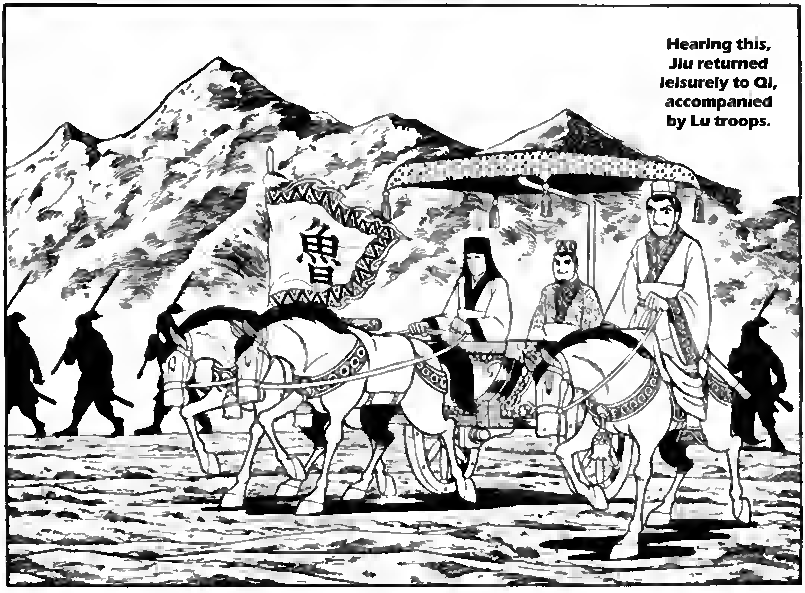
14

YES, XIAO BAI HAS CLEARLY BEEN KILLED.
THEY'RE CARRYING A COFFIN IN A CHARIOT?


YES, HE DIED FROM MY ARROW AND I'VE CONFIRMED THAT HIS BODY IS BEING CARRIED BACK TO QI IN A COFFIN.
XIAO BAI HAS DIED!?



15


Hearing this, Jiu returned leisurely to Qi, accompanied by Lu troops.
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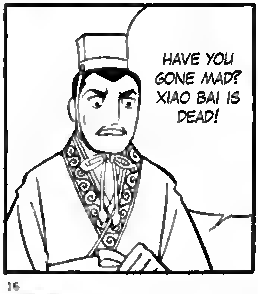
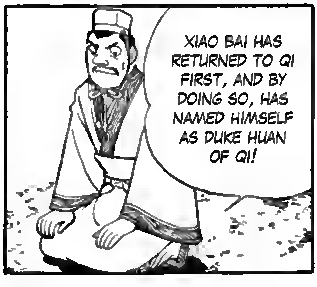
PRINCE JIU! IT'S AN EMER-GENCY!

WHAT IS IT?

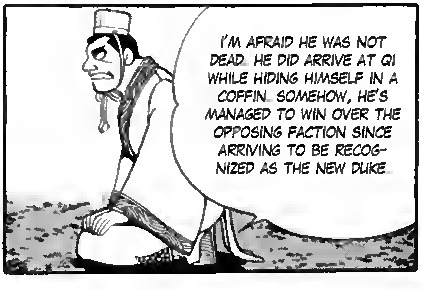

HAVE YOU GONE MAD? XIAO BAI IS DEAD!

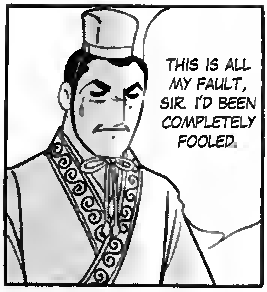
WHAT!?


XIAO BAI HAS RETURNED TO QI FIRST, AND BY DOING SO, HAS NAMED HIMSELF AS DUKE HUAN OF QI!

16

IT WAS AN ACT...!?


I'M AFRAID HE WAS NOT DEAD. HE DID ARRIVE AT QI WHILE HIDING HIMSELF IN A COFFIN. SOMEHOW, HE'S MANAGED TO WIN OVER THE OPPOSING FACTION SINCE ARRIVING TO BE RECOG-NIZED AS THE NEW DUKE.

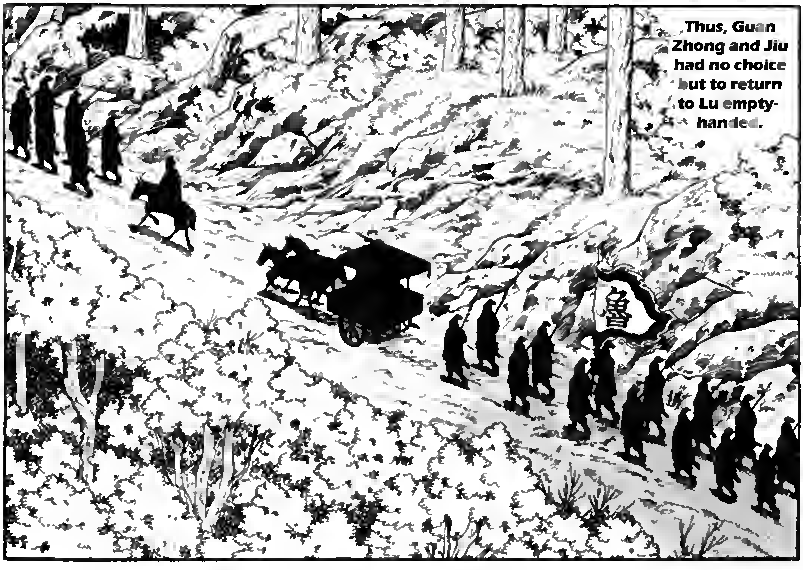

THIS IS ALL MY FAULT, SIR. I'D BEEN COMPLETELY FOOLED.

WHAT A TURN OF EVENTS.

QI TROOPS HAVE NOW BEEN PLACED ON STANDBY TO INTERCEPT YOUR RETURN. I HAVE BEEN SENT HERE TO WARN YOU BY THE FEW QI OFFICIALS WHO STILL SUPPORT YOU

R... RIGHT..
I SUGGEST WE RETURN TO LU FOR THE TIME BEING.

17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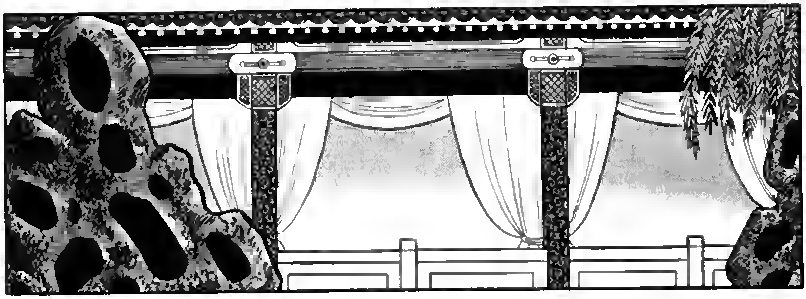
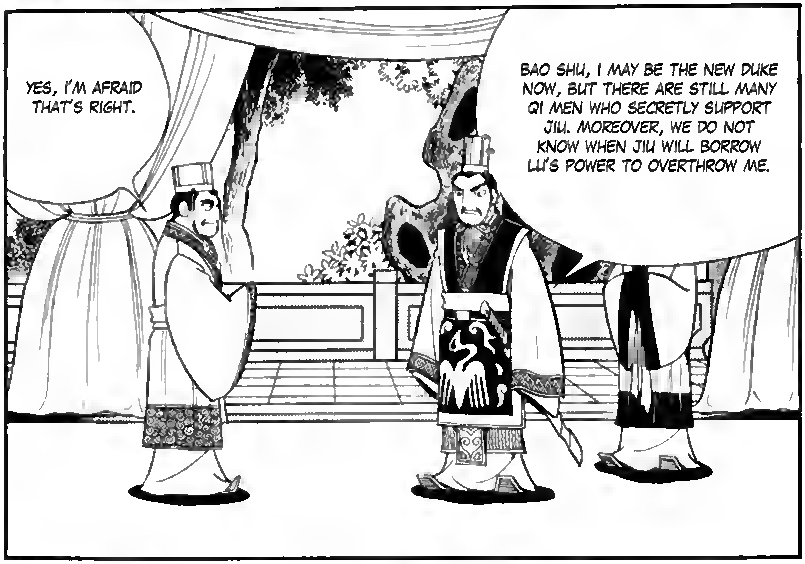
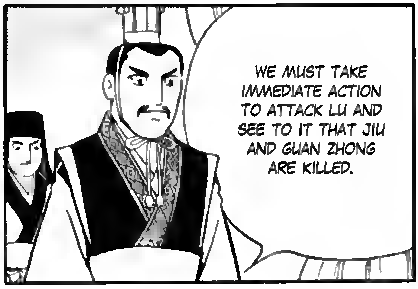
Thus, Guan Zhong and Jiu had no choice but to return to Lu empty-handed.




YES, I'M AFRAID THAT'S RIGHT.
BAO SHU, I MAY BE THE NEW DUKE NOW, BUT THERE ARE STILL MANY QI MEN WHO SECRETLY SUPPORT JIU. MOREOVER, WE DO NOT KNOW WHEN JIU WILL BORROW LU'S POWER TO OVERTHROW ME.

YES, TWO RULERS CANNOT EXIST IF ONE IS TO UNIFY A SINGLE STATE. HOWEVER..

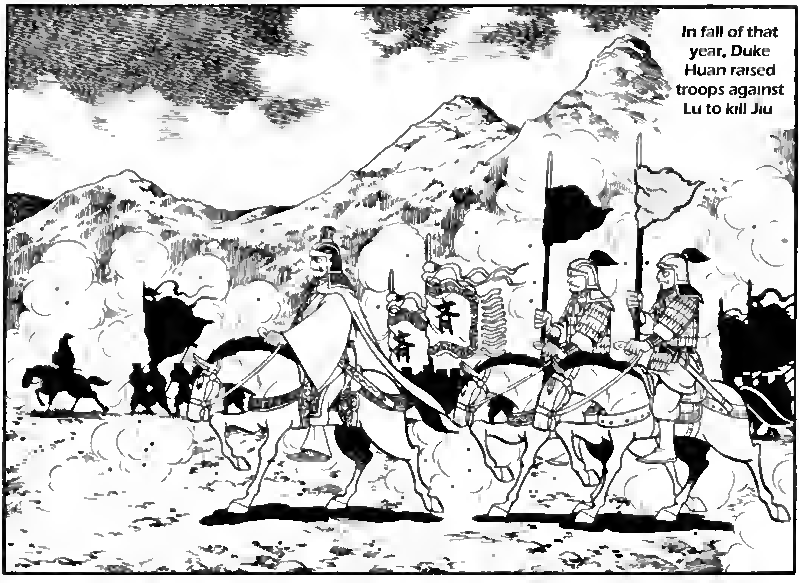

WE MUST TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION TO ATTACK LU AND SEE TO IT THAT JIU AND GUAN ZHONG ARE KILLED.

HM..
YOU MUST NOT KILL GUAN ZHONG. HE IS A RARE TALENT WHO'LL SURELY BE USEFUL FOR QI'S FUTURE.
HOWEVER?
SUCH AS WHEN YOU AND HE DID BUSINESS TOGETHER, HE WOULD UNFAIRLY TAKE A GREATER SHARE OF THE PROFITS.
SUCH AS?
I KNOW YOU AND HE GO WAY BACK, BUT I HAVE HEARD BAD THINGS ABOUT HIM.
I CAN PERSONALLY GUARANTEE THAT WAS NOT DUE TO GREED BUT HIS FAMILY'S POORER SITUATION.
19
THOSE WERE... DUE TO PLANS HE DEVISED TO HELP ME SUCCEED AND MOVE UP IN LIFE. PLANS, OF COURSE, CANNOT SUCCEED EVERY TIME AND I ADMIT OCCASSIONALLY SUFFERING THE CONSEQUENCES
I ALSO HEARD HE PLACED YOU IN VARIOUS BAD SITUATIONS OVER THE YEARS.

HE SIMPLY MET BAD LUCK DURING THOSE TIMES. IT'S MOST DEFINITELY NOT A CASE OF HIM BEING INCOMPETENT.
THEN WHAT OF THE VARIOUS POSTS HE HELD AND WAS DISMISSED FROM?
I, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAVE BEEN FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO SERVE YOU. IF MY LORD WISHES TO RULE QI ABLY, GAO XI AND I ALONE CAN RELIABLY HELP YOU ACHIEVE THAT. HOWEVER, IF YOU DESIRE TO BECOME SOMETHING MORE THAN THE RULER OF A SINGLE DUCHY, AND TO BE KNOWN ACROSS THE ZHOU REALM, THEN YOU WILL NEED GUAN ZHONG.
HMM...
A RULER WHO EMPLOYS GUAN ZHONG WILL FIND HIMSELF SUPERIOR TO ALL. I URGE YOU TO MAKE USE OF HIS TALENTS.
THANK YOU, MY LORD
VERY WELL. IF YOU INSIST SO STRONGLY, HOW CAN I REFUSE?

20

Years later, Guan Zhong would remark, My father and mother may have given me life, but Bao Shu alone knew me...`


In fall of that year, Duke Huan raised troops against Lu to kill Jiu
齊
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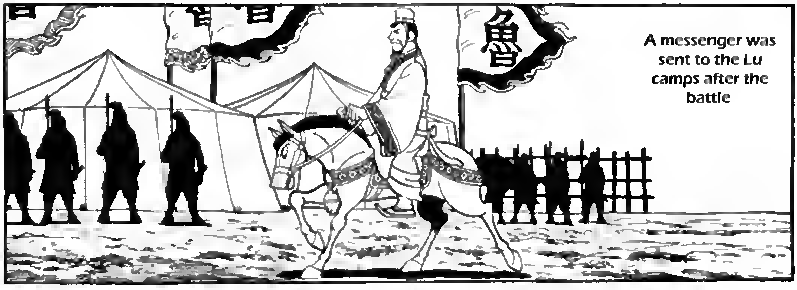
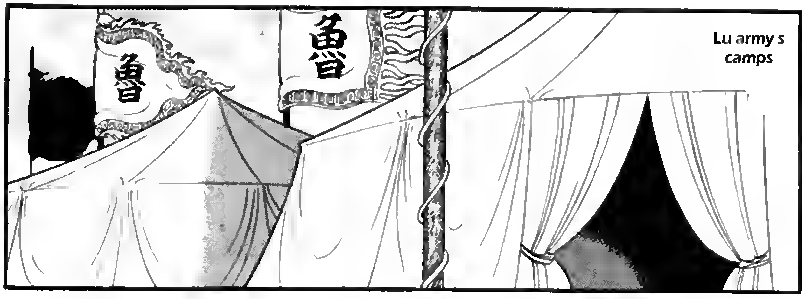
21

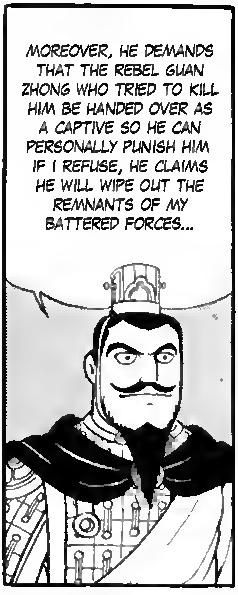
The armies of Lu (魯) and Qi (齊) clashed at Qianshi.

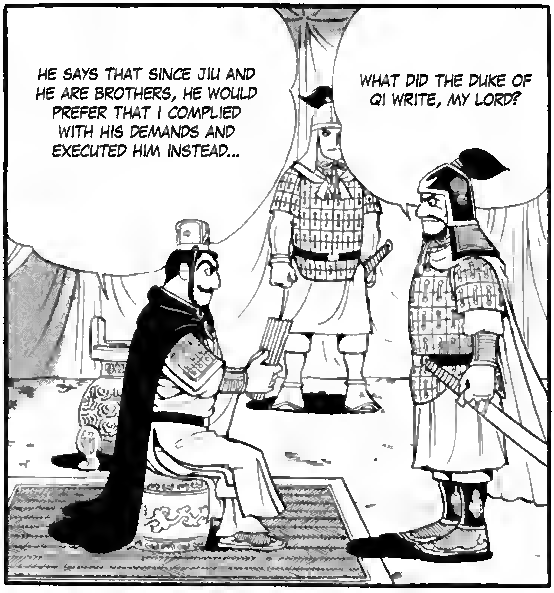
The battle resulted in a resounding success for Qi
齊

22


A messenger was sent to the Lu camps after the battle
魯

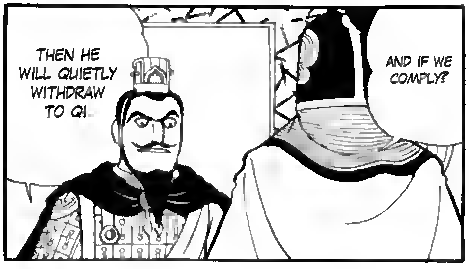

魯
Lu army s camps


MOREOVER, HE DEMANDS THAT THE REBEL GUAN ZHONG WHO TRIED TO KILL HIM BE HANDED OVER AS A CAPTIVE SO HE CAN PERSONALLY PUNISH HIM IF I REFUSE, HE CLAIMS HE WILL WIPE OUT THE REMNANTS OF MY BATTERED FORCES...

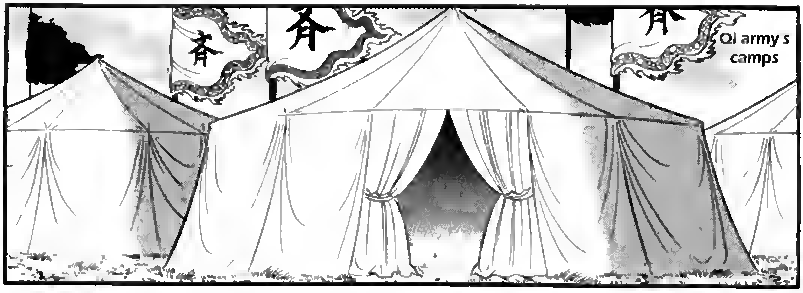

HE SAYS THAT SINCE JIU AND HE ARE BROTHERS, HE WOULD PREFER THAT I COMPLIED WITH HIS DEMANDS AND EXECUTED HIM INSTEAD...
WHAT DID THE DUKE OF QI WRITE, MY LORD?

23

I CANNOT JUST ABANDON JIU NOW AFTER SO LONG. WHAT CAN I DO?


THEN HE WILL QUIETLY WITHDRAW TO QI.
AND IF WE COMPLY?

SO I MUST EXECUTE JIU AND HAND OVER GUAN ZHONG?
I'M AFRAID MY LORD DOES NOT HAVE ANY OTHER OPTION. OUR ARMY IS SURROUNDED AND OUR SUPPLY ROUTES HAVE BEEN CUT OFF. OUR LIVES ARE ALL NOW IN DUKE HUAN'S HANDS TO DO AS HE PLEASES.
SO THERE'S NO OTHER CHOICE, THEN...
YOUR CHOICE WILL DECIDE LU'S VERY EXISTENCE. NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO SHOW COMPASSION TO AN ALREADY LOST CAUSE.
Duke Zhuang thus ordered Jiu's execution,
And sent Guan Zhong as a prisoner.


Qi army's camps

SO WHAT IS TO BECOME OF ME?

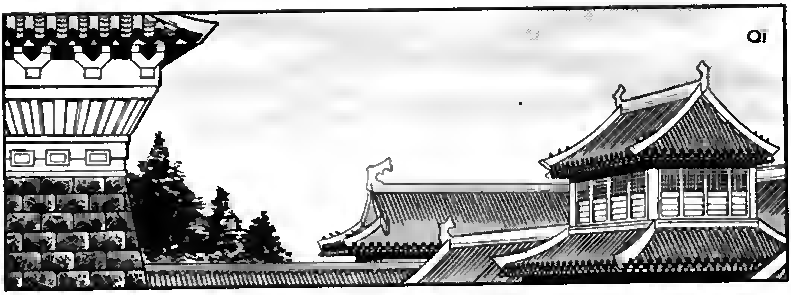
BAO SHU! YOU SEEM WELL.
AH, IT'S BEEN TOO LONG, GUAN ZHONG!

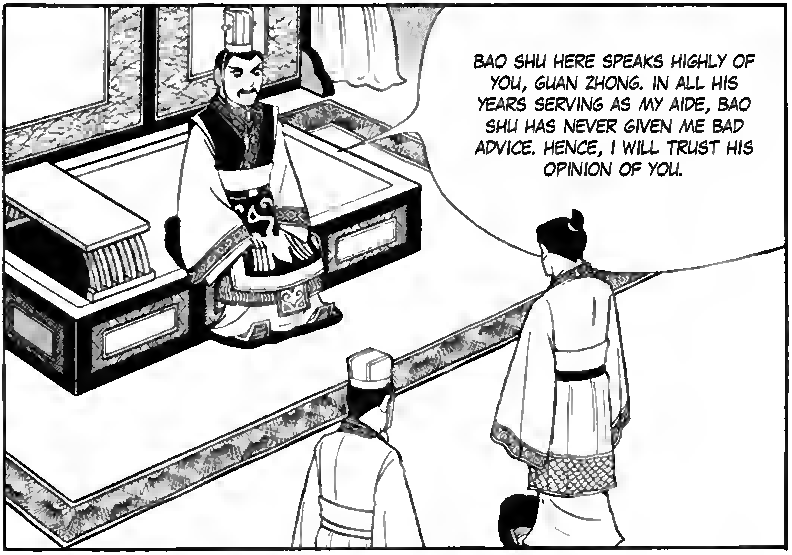
DUKE HUAN IS NOT A FOOL WHO WILL LET TALENT GO TO WASTE

25

WHEW.

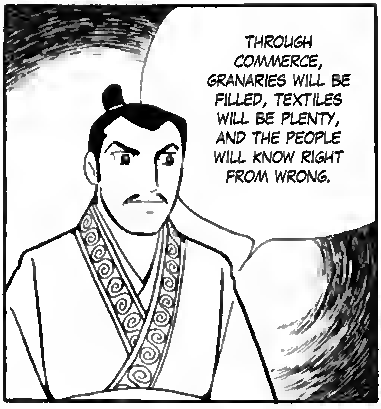
カチャ
LET ME GET THAT OFF YOU RIGHT NOW.


QI


BAO SHU HERE SPEAKS HIGHLY OF YOU, GUAN ZHONG. IN ALL HIS YEARS SERVING AS MY AIDE, BAO SHU HAS NEVER GIVEN ME BAD ADVICE. HENCE, I WILL TRUST HIS OPINION OF YOU.

26

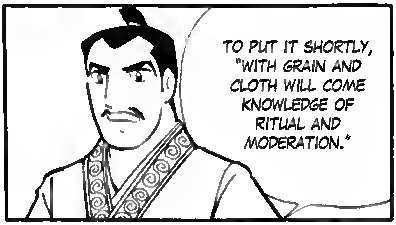
NOW LET ME ASK YOU... WHAT CAN QI DO TO STRENGTHEN ITSELF IN THESE TROUBLED TIMES WHEN ZHOU'S ROYAL AUTHORITY IS COLLAPSING AND THE VARIOUS VASSAL STATES ARE GREEDILY EYEING EACH OTHER'S LANDS?


THROUGH COMMERCE, GRANARIES WILL BE FILLED, TEXTILES WILL BE PLENTY, AND THE PEOPLE WILL KNOW RIGHT FROM WRONG.

ENCOURAGE COMMERCE? THAT'S IT...?

BY ENCOURAGING COMMERCE.

PLEASE EXPLAIN FURTHER.


TO PUT IT SHORTLY, "WITH GRAIN AND CLOTH WILL COME KNOWLEDGE OF RITUAL AND MODERATION."

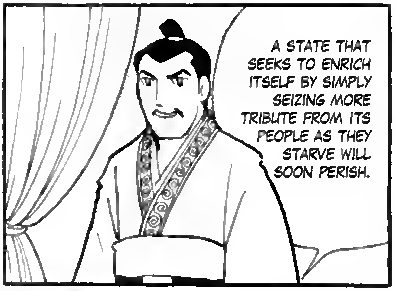
AND IF THE PEOPLE ARE PROSPEROUS, THEN THERE CAN BE GREATER TRIBUTE COLLECTED YEARLY TO ENRICH THE STATE
WHAT USE IS PROPRIETY TO A COLD, STARVING MAN? ONLY WHEN THE PEOPLE ARE FED AND CLOTHED, CAN THEY DISTINGUISH RIGHT FROM WRONG.

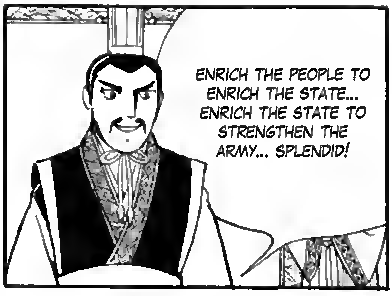
27

GIVING, HMM...

IN GOVERNANCE, GIVING IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN SIMPLY EXTRACTING.

AS QI POSSESSES A COASTLINE, MUCH SALT CAN BE HARVESTED. THIS CAN BE USED TO ATTRACT MERCHANTS FROM ALL ACROSS THE REALM AND THEY CAN BRING WEALTH TO OUR STATE.
WHEN AGRICULTURE IS SUFFICIENTLY DEVELOPED SO THE PEOPLE ARE NO LONGER STARVING, THEY WILL NATURALLY SEEK CLOTHES AND OTHER GOODS TO ENRICH THEIR LIVES. THAT IS WHY COMMERCE MUST BE ENCOURAGED AS WELL.
HMM...
IN WAR, VAST FUNDS ARE NEEDED FOR SUCCESS. IF A STATE ALREADY POSSESSES RICH COFFERS, IT CAN WAGE WAR WITHOUT TOO NEGATIVELY AFFECTING THE LIVELIHOOD OF ITS PEOPLE. THUS, COMMERCE WILL ULTIMATELY BUILD A RICH STATE AND A STRONG ARMY.
BUT WITH COMMERCE WILL SURELY COME DISREPUTABLE MEN WHO ENDEAVOUR TO MAKE MONEY BY UNETHICAL MEANS. WHAT DO YOU SAY TO THAT?
I SEE.
28
MERCHANTS WHO STRAY FROM THIS PATH SHOULD BE FAIRLY PUNISHED WITH APPROPRIATE LAWS.
AS IN ALL PATHS IN LIFE, THERE IS AN IDEAL "WAY (DAO)." JUST AS THE WARRIOR AND THE MINISTER EACH HAS THEIR WAY, SO TOO DOES THE MERCHANT.

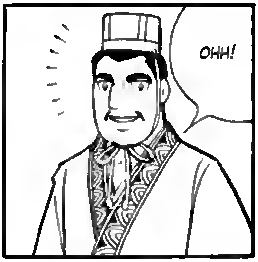

A STATE THAT SEEKS TO ENRICH ITSELF BY SIMPLY SEIZING MORE TRIBUTE FROM ITS PEOPLE AS THEY STARVE WILL SOON PERISH.


ENRICH THE PEOPLE TO ENRICH THE STATE... ENRICH THE STATE TO STRENGTHEN THE ARMY... SPLENDID!

ME!? CHANCELLOR?

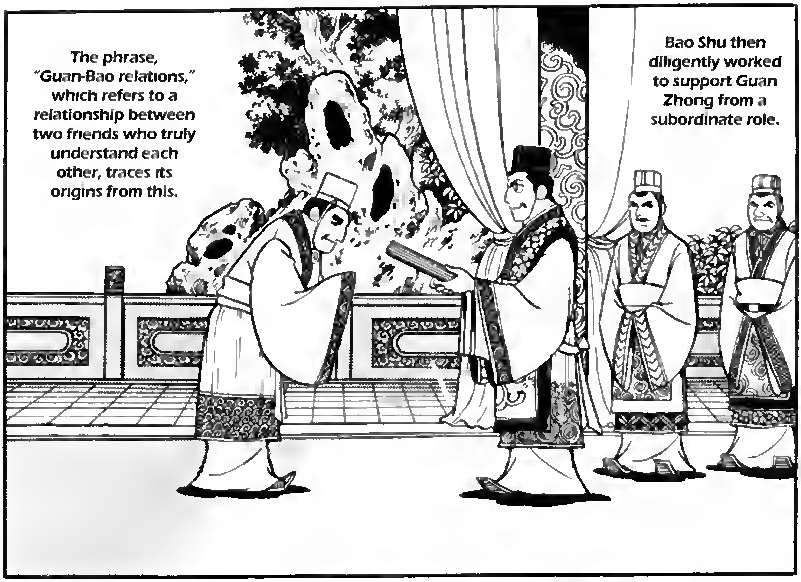
I WANT YOU TO CARRY OUT THOSE IDEAS AS MY NEW CHANCELLOR!

I AM IN YOUR DEBT, BAO SHU.
GUAN ZHONG! YOU CAN FINALLY MAKE FULL USE OF YOUR TALENTS!


OHH!

29

THANK YOU, MY LORD!

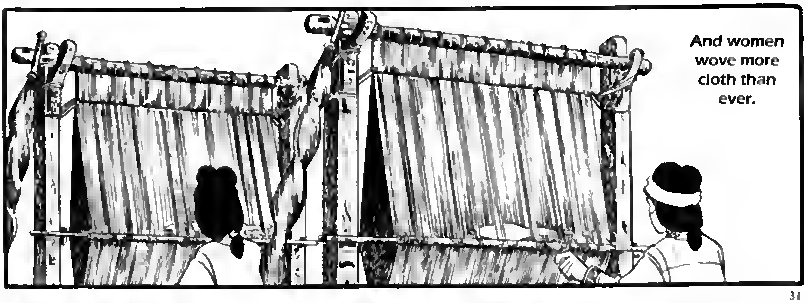

The phrase, "Guan-Bao relations," which refers to a relationship between two friends who truly understand each other, traces its origins from this.
Bao Shu then diligently worked to support Guan Zhong from a subordinate role.

30

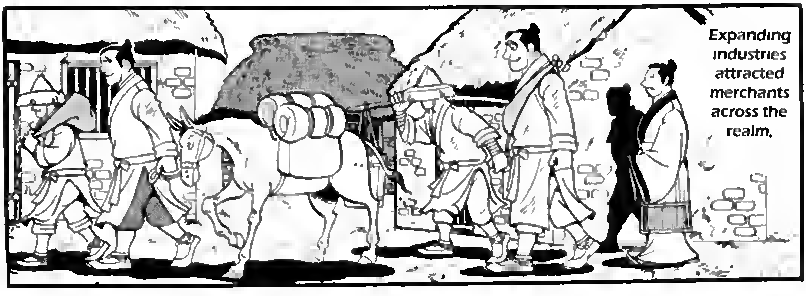
Finding the ideal post at last, Guan Zhong began his great work.

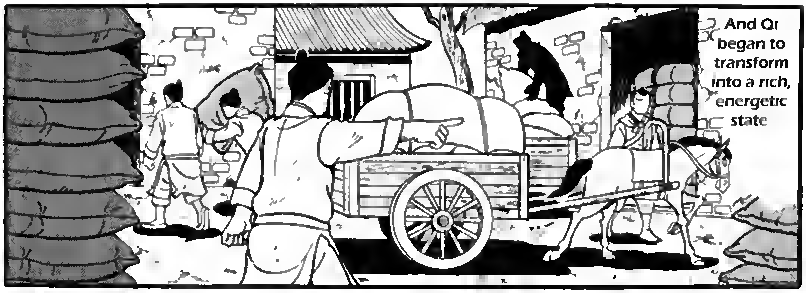
Guan Zhong did away with various laws that ordinary people disliked and strove to please all their demands. Less-burdened farmers then turned to reclaim more land.

Those on the coast expanded salt production.


And women wove more cloth than ever.

31


Expanding industries attracted merchants across the realm.

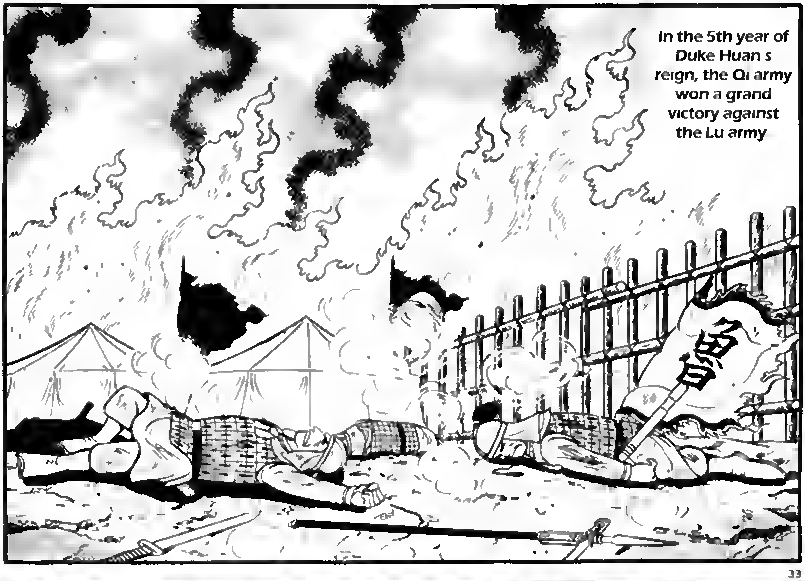

And Qi began to transform into a rich, energetic state

Just as rich lands attract many people, the rich state of Qi began to attract many men of talent

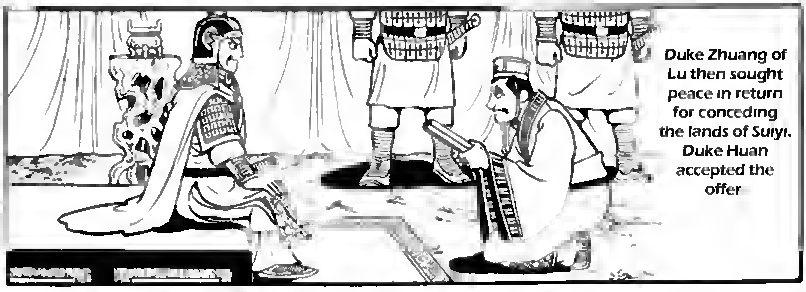
32

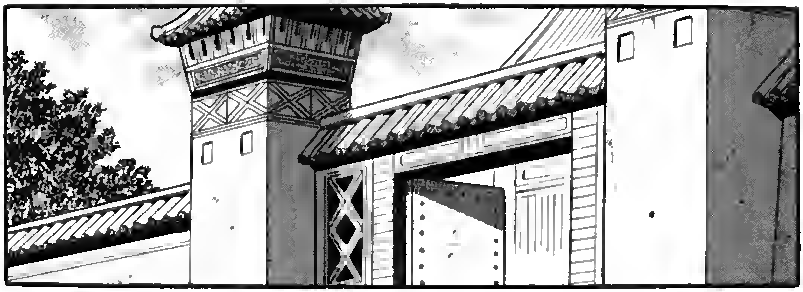
Meanwhile, men who broke the law or sought money by unscrupulous means were punished accordingly

As Qi grew powerful, it exchanged blows with Lu more and more

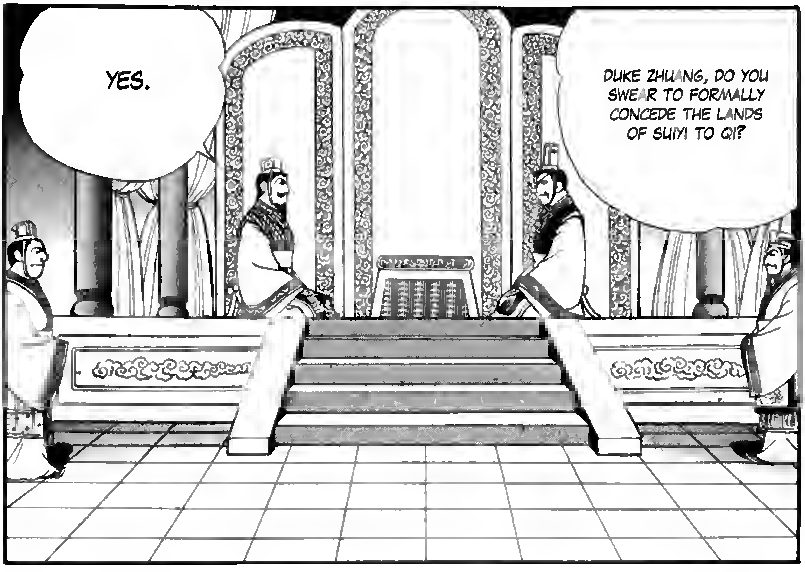

In the 5th year of Duke Huan s reign, the Qi army won a grand victory against the Lu army

33

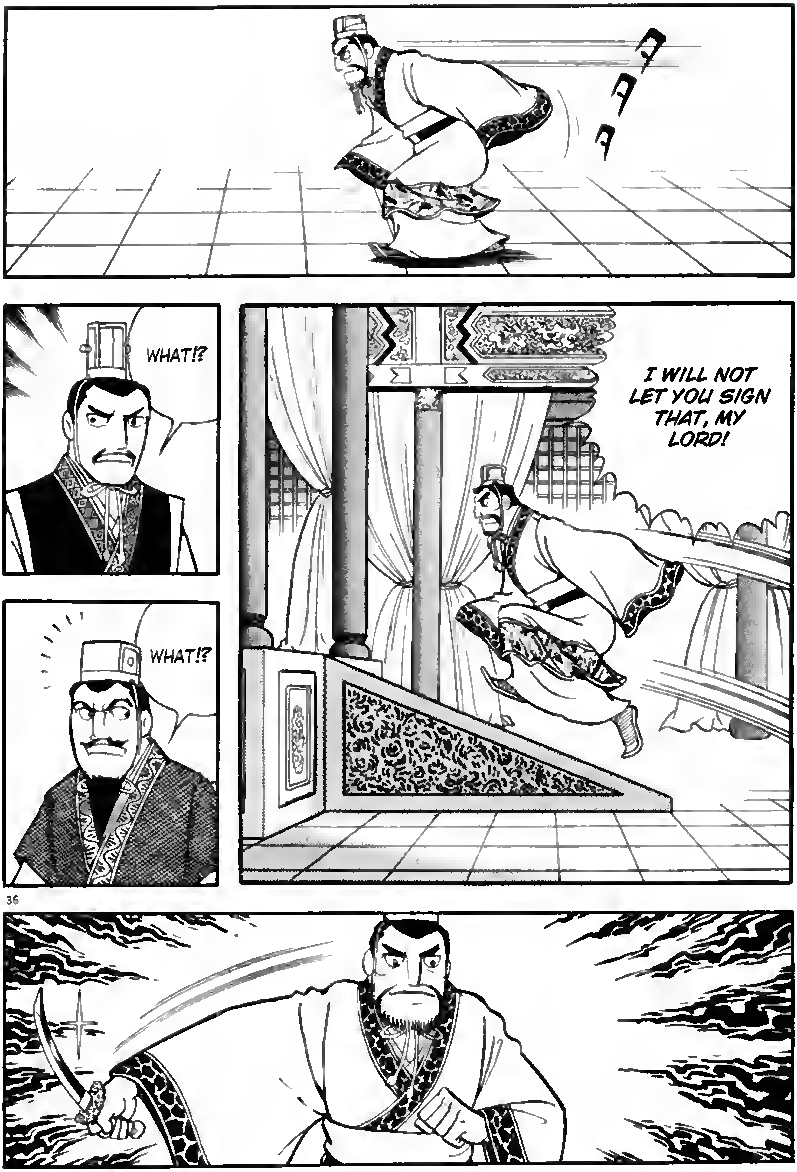

Duke Zhuang of Lu then sought peace in return for conceding the lands of Suiyi. Duke Huan accepted the offer



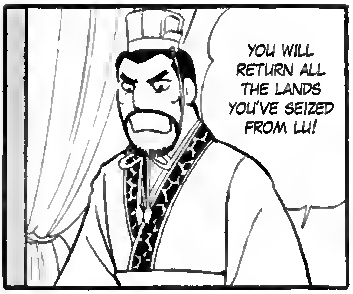
34


YES.
DUKE ZHUANG, DO YOU SWEAR TO FORMALLY CONCEDE THE LANDS OF SHIYI TO QI?

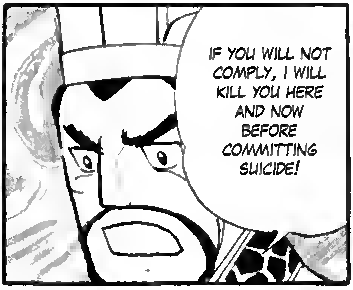
35


WHAT!?
WHAT!?
I WILL NOT LET YOU SIGN THAT, MY LORD!
36

RESTRAIN THAT LUNATIC AT ONCE!
DON'T MOVE OR YOUR LORD IS DEAD!
37
A MERE GENERAL DARES TO INTEREFERE WITH THE PEACE NEGO-TIATION!?
I AM CAO MEI, THE LU GENERAL DEFEATED BY YOUR ARMY!
W-WHO ARE YOU!?

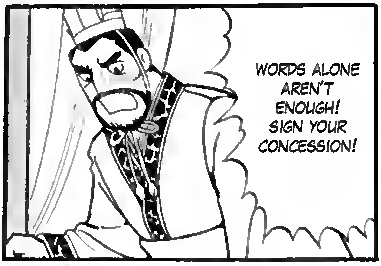

YOU WILL RETURN ALL THE LANDS YOU'VE SEIZED FROM LU!

WHAT WILL YOU DEMAND THEN?
I AM INDEBTED TO MY LORD FOR MAKING ME GENERAL, AND WHILE YOU MAY HAVE BEATEN ME ON THE BATTLEFIELD, I WILL NOT LET YOU HUMILIATE MY LORD WITH THIS PEACE TREATY!


IF YOU WILL NOT COMPLY, I WILL KILL YOU HERE AND NOW BEFORE COMMITTING SUICIDE!

Duke Huan reluctantly wrote and signed a promise to return Lu s lands

V-VERY WELL...

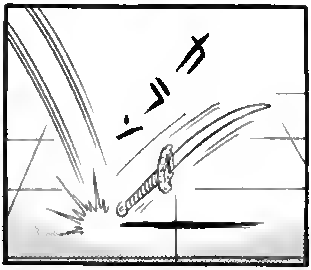

WORDS ALONE AREN'T ENOUGH! SIGN YOUR CONCESSION!

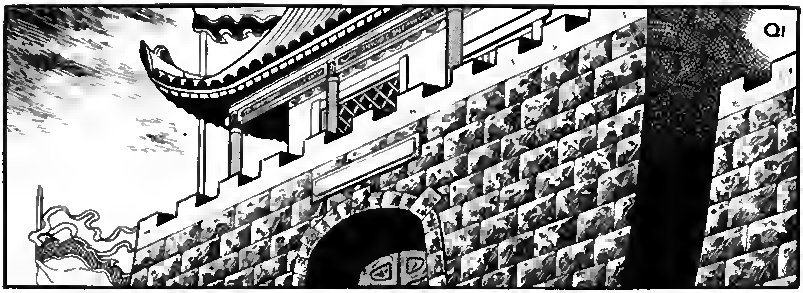
MN...
MY LORD, LU AND QI CAN NOW STAND ON EQUAL FOOTING ONCE MORE.

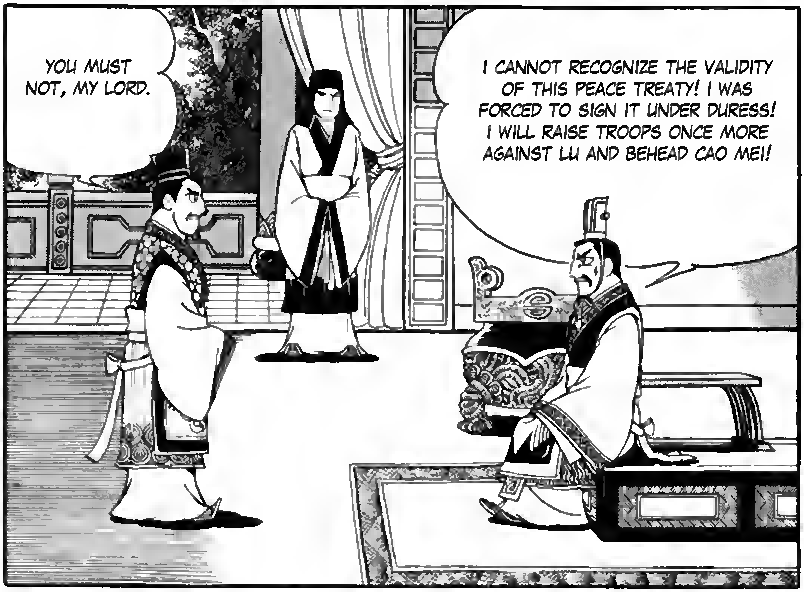
YES, THIS WILL DO.

I NOW NO LONGER HAVE A NEED TO POINT MY BLADE AT QI.

HAHAHA!

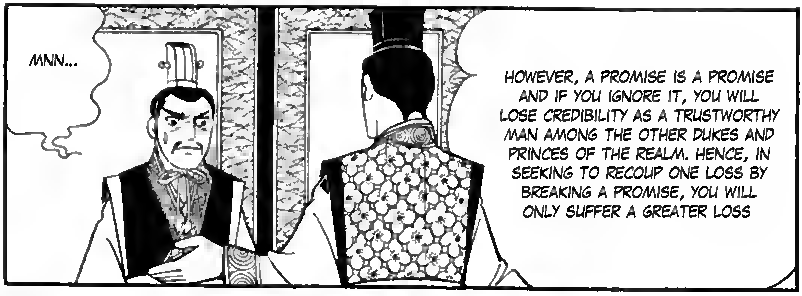



Q!

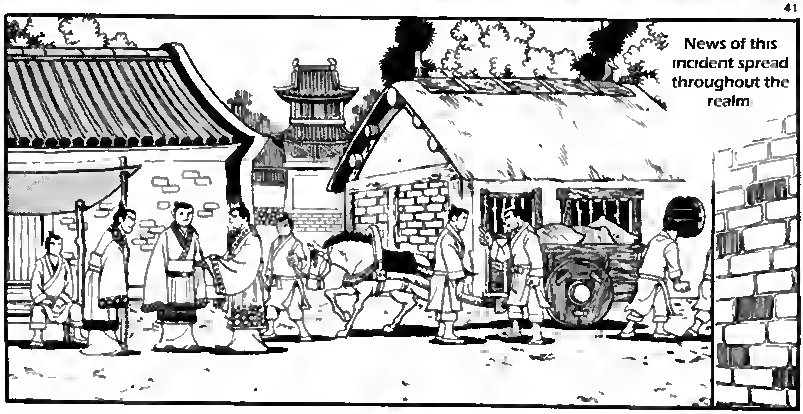

YOU MUST NOT, MY LORD.
I CANNOT RECOGNIZE THE VALIDITY OF THIS PEACE TREATY! I WAS FORCED TO SIGN IT UNDER DURESS! I WILL RAISE TROOPS ONCE MORE AGAINST LU AND BEHEAD CAO MEI!

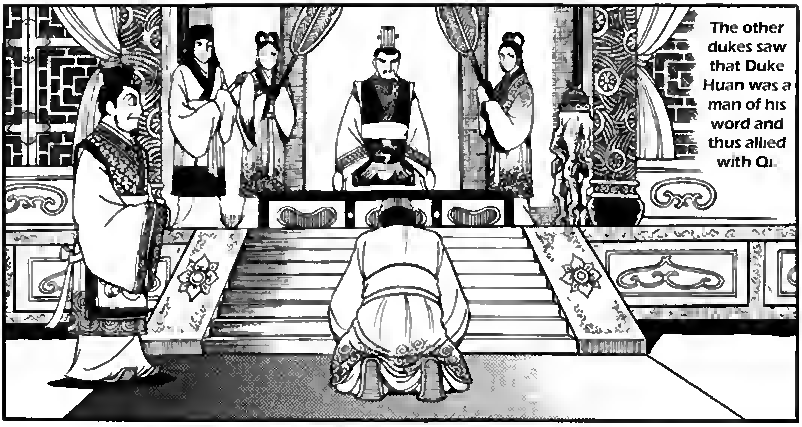
IT IS INDEED TRUE MY LORD ONLY SIGNED THAT PEACE TREATY UNDER DURESS.

WHAT!? YOU WANT ME TO RESPECT THAT FARCE OF A PEACE TREATY!?


MNN...
HOWEVER, A PROMISE IS A PROMISE AND IF YOU IGNORE IT, YOU WILL LOSE CREDIBILITY AS A TRUSTWORTHY MAN AMONG THE OTHER DUKES AND PRINCES OF THE REALM. HENCE, IN SEEKING TO RECOUP ONE LOSS BY BREAKING A PROMISE, YOU WILL ONLY SUFFER A GREATER LOSS

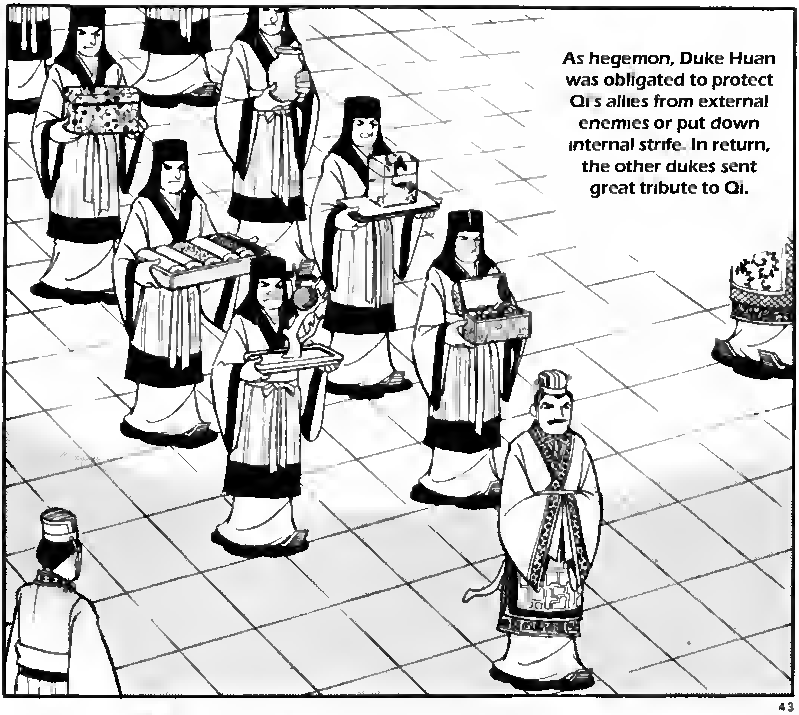
DO NOT BE SWAYED BY THE ANGER OF A BRIEF MOMENT.
FINE, I WILL SUPPRESS MY RAGE THIS TIME AND DO AS YOU SAY, GUAN ZHONG.


News of this incident spread throughout the realm

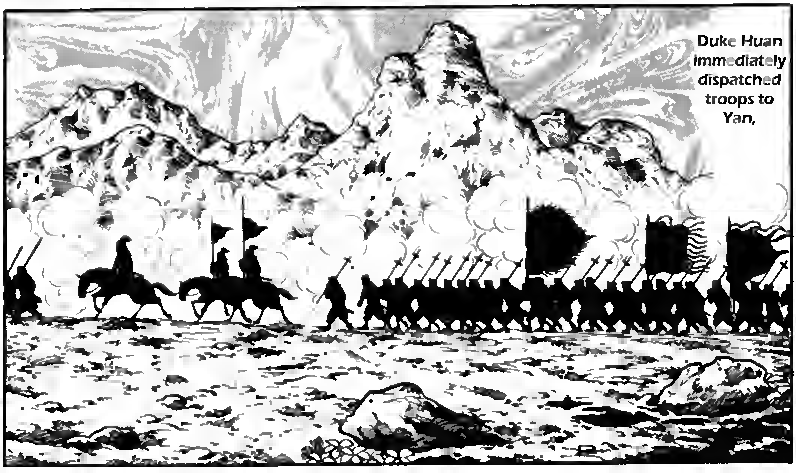

The other dukes saw that Duke Huan was a man of his word and thus allied with Qi.

42

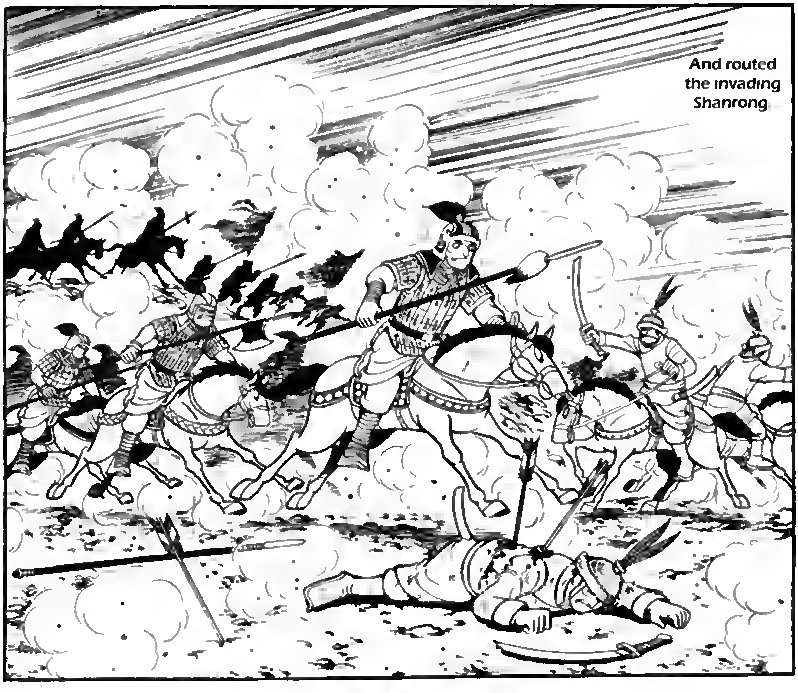
2 years later, when the dukes of the whole realm assembled at Zhen, they recognized Qi as the leader of their alliance, making Duke Huan the first hegemon of the Spring and Autumn period.

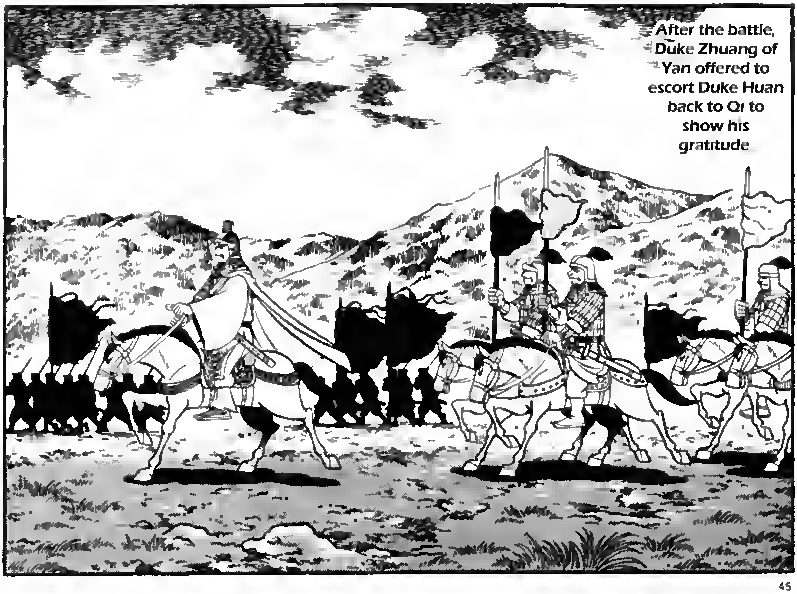

As hegemon, Duke Huan was obligated to protect Qi's allies from external enemies or put down internal strife. In return, the other dukes sent great tribute to Qi.
43

*SHANRONG (山戎): LITERALLY MEANING MOUNTAIN BARBARIAN, WERE A NOMADIC PEOPLE IN NORTHERN CHINA


Duke Huan immediately dispatched troops to Yan,

44


And routed the invading Shanrong


After the battle, Duke Zhuang of Yan offered to escort Duke Huan back to Qi to show his gratitude

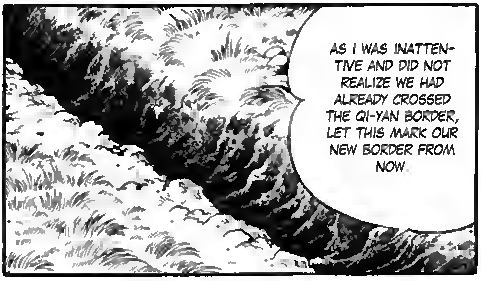
45

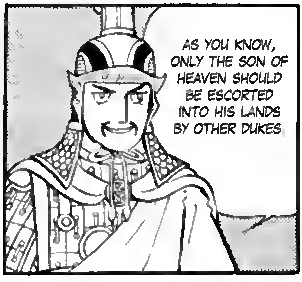
WHAT IS IT, GUAN ZHONG?
MY LORD!

WE ARE ALREADY WITHIN QI'S LAND. ARE YOU AWARE THAT ONLY THE SON OF HEAVEN IS ENTITLED TO BE ESCORTED ALL THE WAY BACK TO HIS LAND BY DUKES?

TRUE... BUT HE'S ALREADY OFFERED TO ESCORT ME. WHAT SHOULD I DO?
YOU WANT ME TO GIVE UP QI LAND TO YAN!? EVEN THOUGH I WAS THE ONE WHO CAME ALL THE WAY OUT TO HELP YAN?
IF YOU MAKE THIS PLACE THE NEW QI-YAN BORDER, THEN YOU WILL NOT HAVE VIOLATED THE RULE.
VERY WELL, DIG A TRENCH HERE TO MARK THE BORDER!
HMM...
A HEGEMON WOULD DO NO LESS IN ORDER TO SERVE AS THE ROLE MODEL FOR OTHER DUKES.

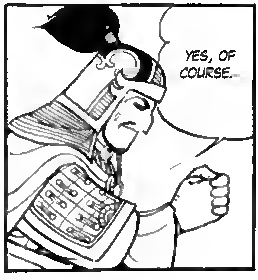
IT IS THE LEAST I CAN DO AFTER YOU SAVED MY LAND.
THANK YOU FOR ESCORTING ME ALL THE WAY HERE, DUKE ZHUANG.


AS I WAS INATTENTIVE AND DID NOT REALIZE WE HAD ALREADY CROSSED THE QI-YAN BORDER, LET THIS MARK OUR NEW BORDER FROM NOW.


AS YOU KNOW, ONLY THE SON OF HEAVEN SHOULD BE ESCORTED INTO HIS LANDS BY OTHER DUKES.

This famous event quickly spread across the realm and served to make Duan Huan even more respected

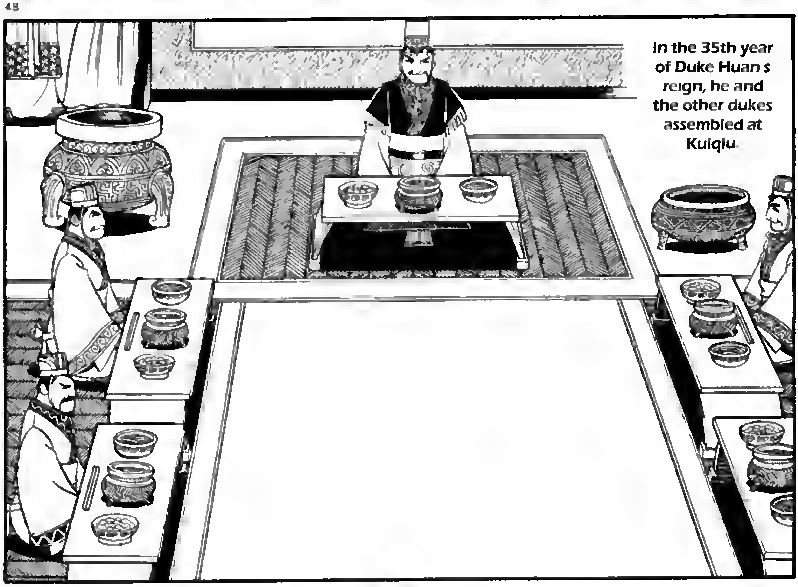
47

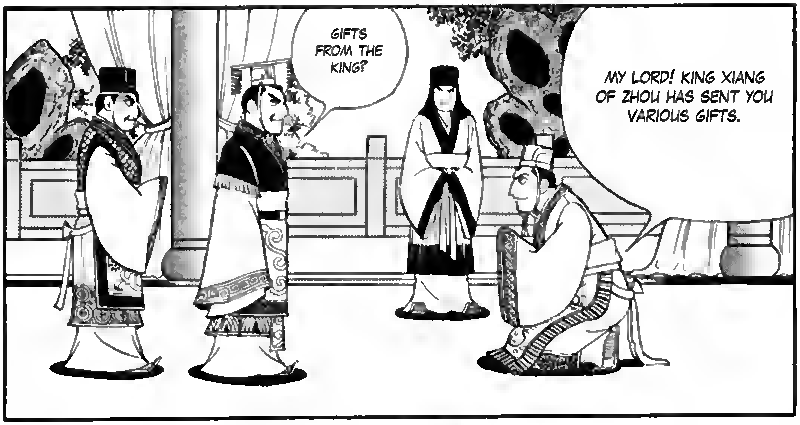

YES, OF COURSE.

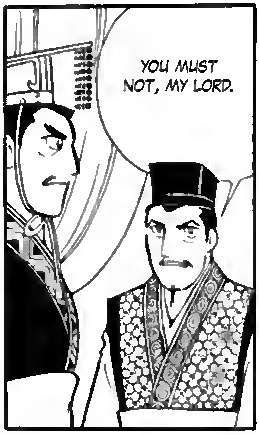
Many years passed since then...

Whether trouble flared up in the East or the West, Duke Huan always took charge in responding accordingly. However, years of unchallenged leadership had served to make him a little too arrogant.

48


In the 35th year of Duke Huan's reign, he and the other dukes assembled at Kuiqiu.

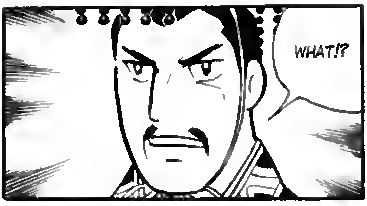

GIFTS FROM THE KING?
MY LORD! KING XIANG OF ZHOU HAS SENT YOU VARIOUS GIFTS.

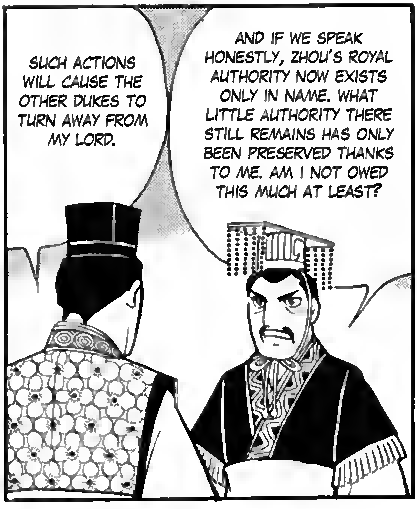

YOU MUST NOT, MY LORD.

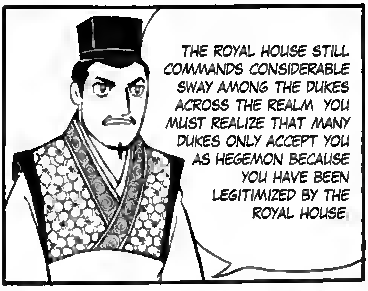
IS THAT SO? THEN I WILL GLADLY OBLIGE.
YES, AND ACCORDING TO THE ROYAL MESSENGER, YOU NEED NOT GO THROUGH THE ELABORATE, FORMAL SHOW OF DEFERENCE. YOU ARE FREE TO ACCEPT THE GIFTS HOWEVER YOU WISH.

49

BUT THE KING SENT A MESSENGER EXPLICITLY TELLING ME I'M FREE TO ACCEPT IT WITHOUT THE FORMAL DEFERENTIAL ACTS.
THE HEGEMON MUST ALWAYS SHOW THE PROPER DEFERENCE TO THE KING.


WHAT!?


SUCH ACTIONS WILL CAUSE THE OTHER DUKES TO TURN AWAY FROM MY LORD.
AND IF WE SPEAK HONESTLY, ZHOU'S ROYAL AUTHORITY NOW EXISTS ONLY IN NAME. WHAT LITTLE AUTHORITY THERE STILL REMAINS HAS ONLY BEEN PRESERVED THANKS TO ME. AM I NOT OWED THIS MUCH AT LEAST?


THE ROYAL HOUSE STILL COMMANDS CONSIDERABLE SWAY AMONG THE DUKES ACROSS THE REALM. YOU MUST REALIZE THAT MANY DUKES ONLY ACCEPT YOU AS HEGEMON BECAUSE YOU HAVE BEEN LEGITIMIZED BY THE ROYAL HOUSE.

HMM...
HENCE, EVEN IF THE SON OF HEAVEN INSISTS YOU NEED NOT SHOW DEFERENCE, YOU MUST NEVER AGREE AS LONG AS YOU REMAIN HIS SERVANT.

50

Duke Huan listened to Guan Zhong's advice once again and showed the royal envoys the formal deference as he accepted the gifts

THE FUTURE...
MY LORD, IT IS INEVITABLE FOR ALL LIVING THINGS TO MEET AN END ONE DAY. IF YOU WOULD EXCUSE ME COMMENTING ON YOUR ADVANCED AGE, THEN I ASK YOU TO SERIOUSLY CONSIDER THE FUTURE.

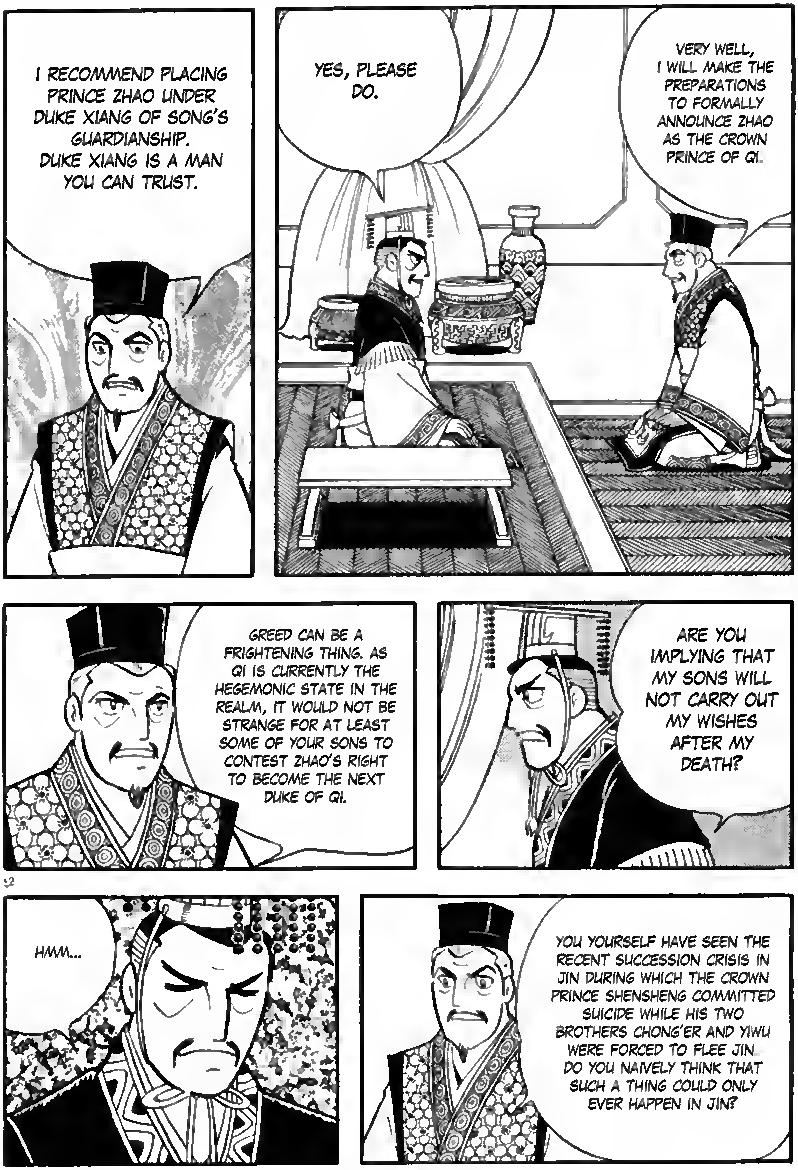
51

TRUE, IT IS TIME I DECIDE THAT ONCE AND FOR ALL...

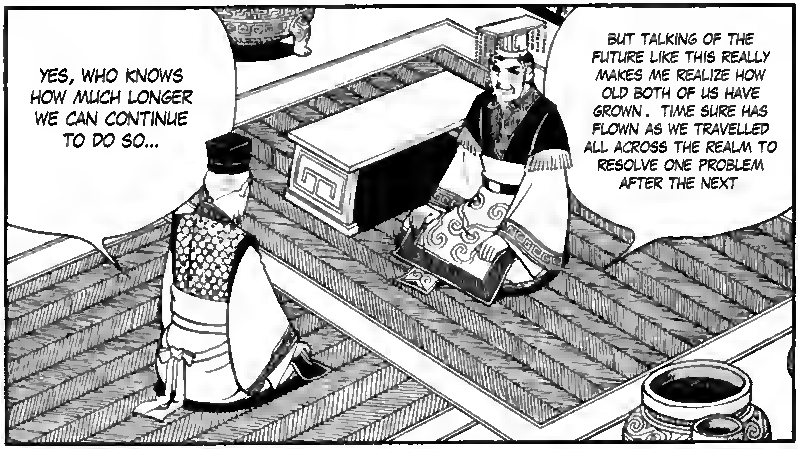
YOU HAVE FATHERED MANY SONS WITH MANY CONCUBINES. YOU MUST CHOOSE WHICH WILL BE YOUR SUCCESSOR.

I THINK ZHAO, THE SON I HAD WITH LADY ZHENG, WILL DO FINE...

*Duke Xiang of Song would claim the hegemon title after Duke Huan of Qi's death

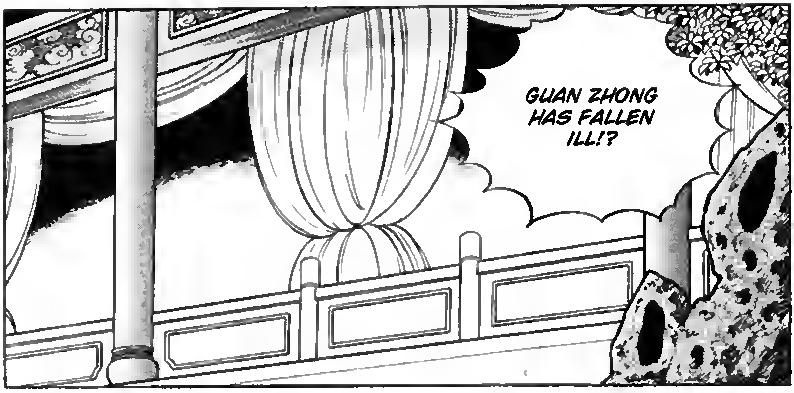

I RECOMMEND PLACING PRINCE ZHAO UNDER DUKE XIANG OF SONG'S GUARDIANSHIP. DUKE XIANG IS A MAN YOU CAN TRUST.
YES, PLEASE DO.
VERY WELL, I WILL MAKE THE PREPARATIONS TO FORMALLY ANNOUNCE ZHAO AS THE CROWN PRINCE OF QI.
GREED CAN BE A FRIGHTENING THING. AS QI IS CURRENTLY THE HEGEMONIC STATE IN THE REALM, IT WOULD NOT BE STRANGE FOR AT LEAST SOME OF YOUR SONS TO CONTEST ZHAO'S RIGHT TO BECOME THE NEXT DUKE OF QI.
ARE YOU IMPLYING THAT MY SONS WILL NOT CARRY OUT MY WISHES AFTER MY DEATH?
52
HMM...
YOU YOURSELF HAVE SEEN THE RECENT SUCCESSION CRISIS IN JIN DURING WHICH THE CROWN PRINCE SHENSHENG COMMITTED SUICIDE WHILE HIS TWO BROTHERS CHONG'ER AND YIWU WERE FORCED TO FLEE JIN. DO YOU NAIVELY THINK THAT SUCH A THING COULD ONLY EVER HAPPEN IN JIN?

VERY WELL, I WILL ASK DUKE XIANG TO ACCEPT GUARDIANSHIP OF ZHAO JUST IN CASE
DISASTER IS ONLY PREVENTED BY PLANNING AHEAD


YES, WHO KNOWS HOW MUCH LONGER WE CAN CONTINUE TO DO SO...
BUT TALKING OF THE FUTURE LIKE THIS REALLY MAKES ME REALIZE HOW OLD BOTH OF US HAVE GROWN. TIME SURE HAS FLOWN AS WE TRAVELLED ALL ACROSS THE REALM TO RESOLVE ONE PROBLEM AFTER THE NEXT

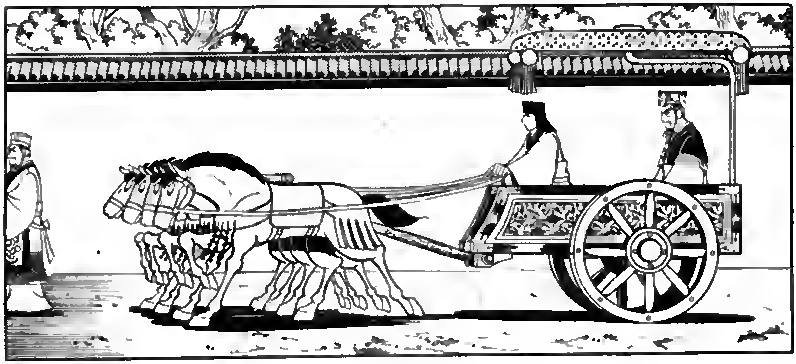
53

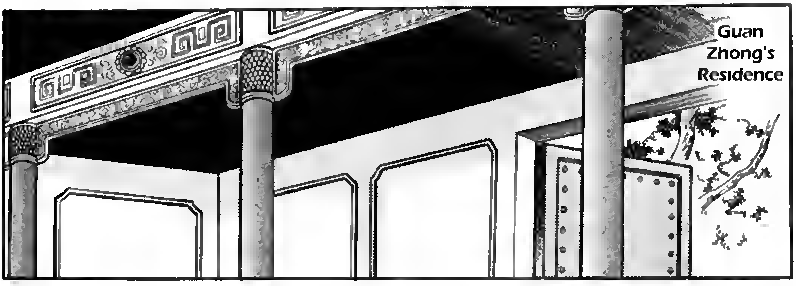
By this time already, Guan Zhong felt his own death creeping closer and closer.

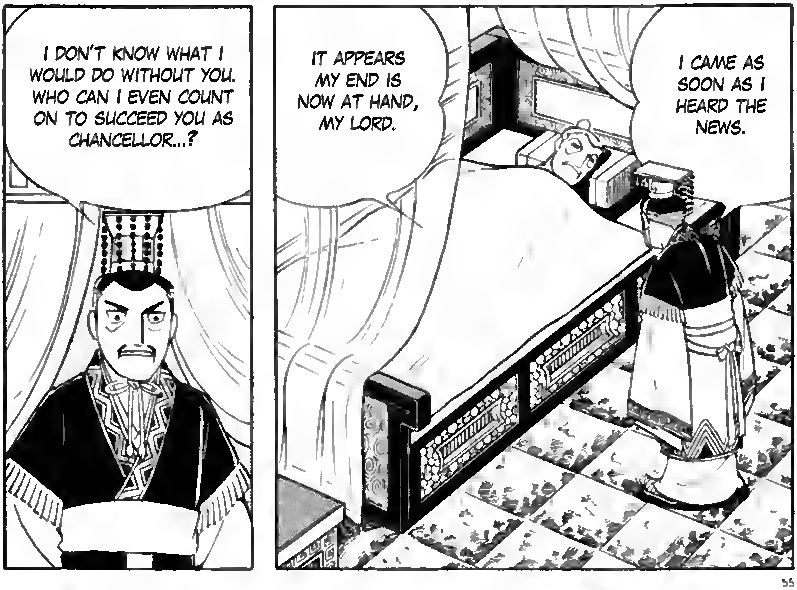

GUAN ZHONG HAS FALLEN ILL!?

THIS IS TERRIBLE! I MUST VISIT HIM AT ONCE!
THE DOCTOR FEARS HE WILL NOT LIVE MUCH LONGER...

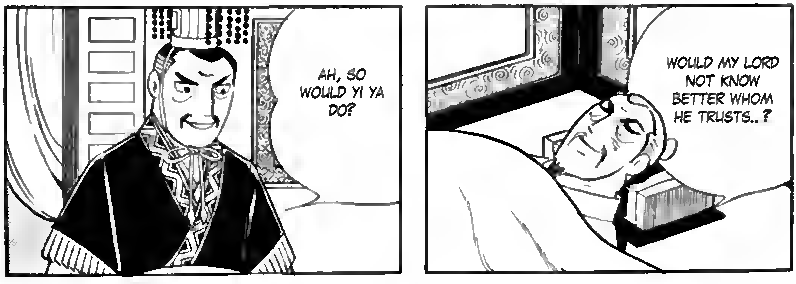
54



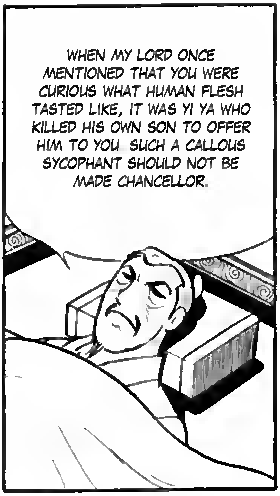

Guan Zhong's Residence

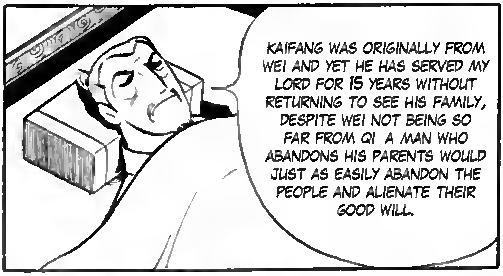

I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WOULD DO WITHOUT YOU. WHO CAN I EVEN COUNT ON TO SUCCEED YOU AS CHANCELLOR...?
IT APPEARS MY END IS NOW AT HAND, MY LORD.
I CAME AS SOON AS I HEARD THE NEWS.

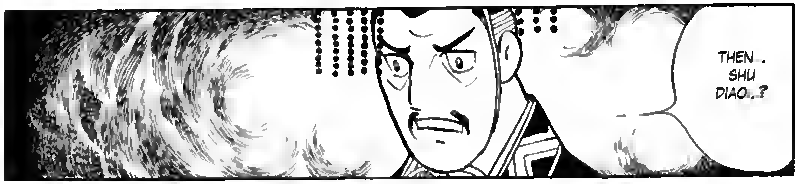
55

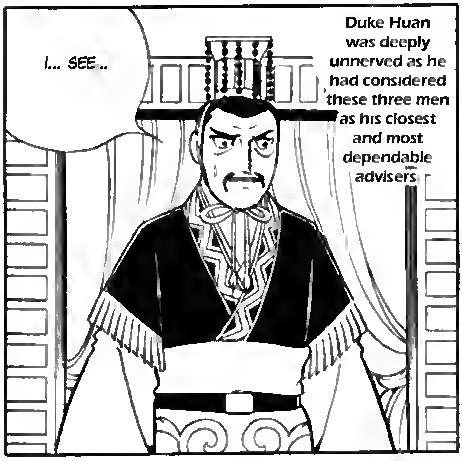

AH, SO WOULD YI YA DO?
WOULD MY LORD NOT KNOW BETTER WHOM HE TRUSTS..?

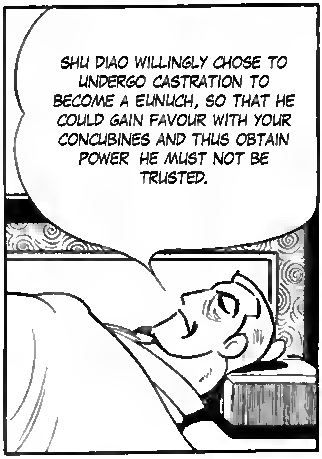
THEN WHAT ABOUT KAIFANG?

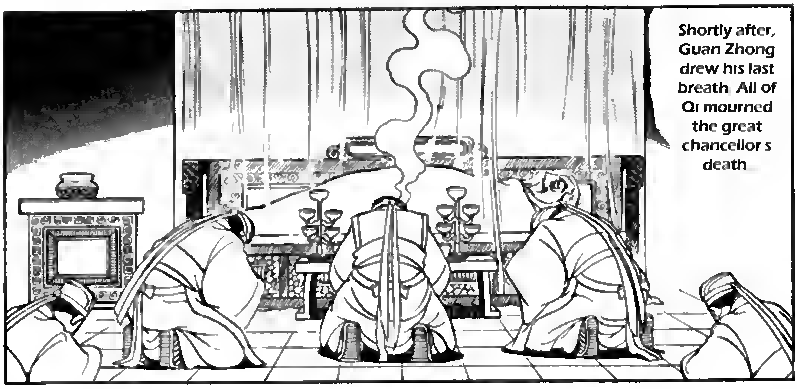

WHEN MY LORD ONCE MENTIONED THAT YOU WERE CURIOUS WHAT HUMAN FLESH TASTED LIKE, IT WAS YI YA WHO KILLED HIS OWN SON TO OFFER HIM TO YOU. SUCH A CALLOUS SYCOPHANT SHOULD NOT BE MADE CHANCELLOR.

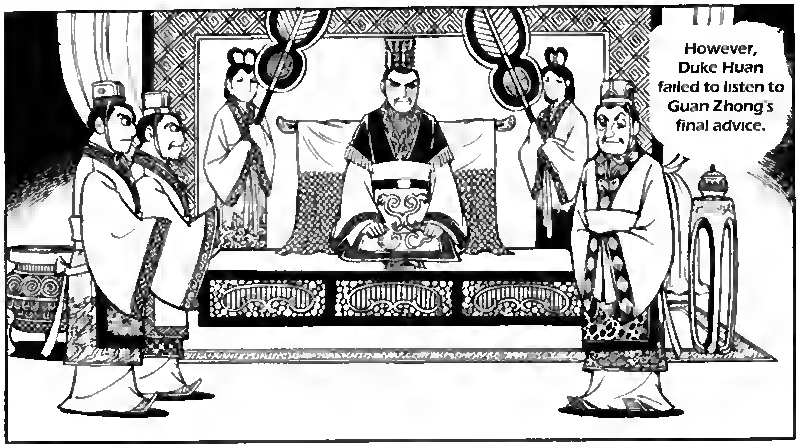

KAIFANG WAS ORIGINALLY FROM WEI AND YET HE HAS SERVED MY LORD FOR 15 YEARS WITHOUT RETURNING TO SEE HIS FAMILY, DESPITE WEI NOT BEING SO FAR FROM QI. A MAN WHO ABANDONS HIS PARENTS WOULD JUST AS EASILY ABANDON THE PEOPLE AND ALIENATE THEIR GOOD WILL.

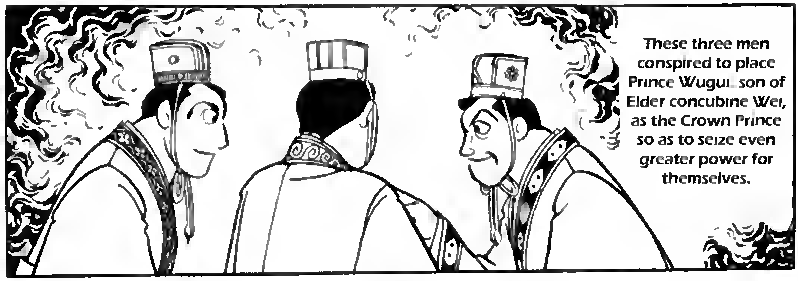

THEN . SHU DIAO..?

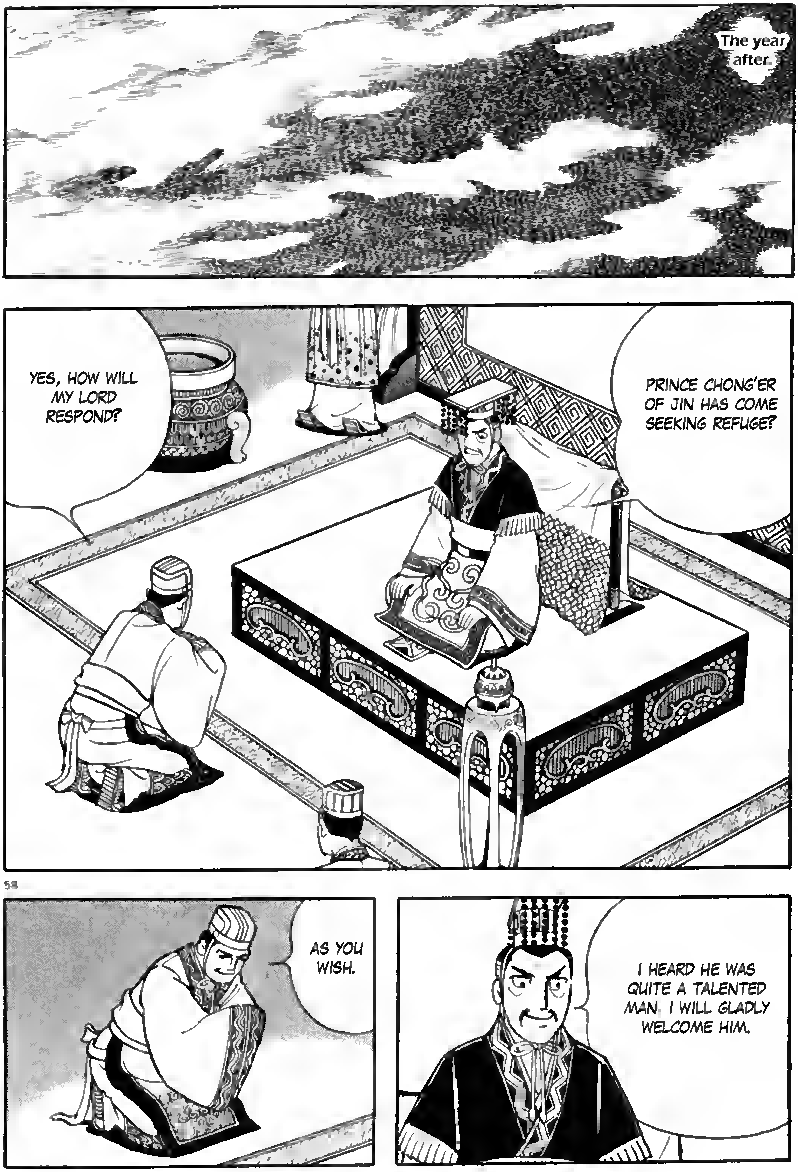

I... SEE..
Duke Huan was deeply unnerved as he had considered these three men as his closest and most dependable advisers

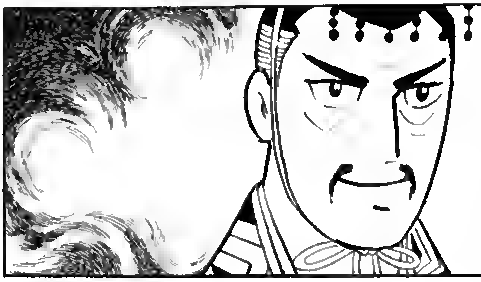

SHU DIAO WILLINGLY CHOSE TO UNDERGO CASTRATION TO BECOME A EUNUCH, SO THAT HE COULD GAIN FAVOUR WITH YOUR CONCUBINES AND THUS OBTAIN POWER. HE MUST NOT BE TRUSTED.


Shortly after, Guan Zhong drew his last breath. All of Qi mourned the great chancellor's death.


However, Duke Huan failed to listen to Guan Zhong's final advice.


These three men conspired to place Prince Wuguī, son of Elder concubine Wei, as the Crown Prince so as to seize even greater power for themselves.


The year after.
PRINCE CHONG'ER OF JIN HAS COME SEEKING REFUGE?
YES, HOW WILL MY LORD RESPOND?
I HEARD HE WAS QUITE A TALENTED MAN. I WILL GLADLY WELCOME HIM.
AS YOU WISH.

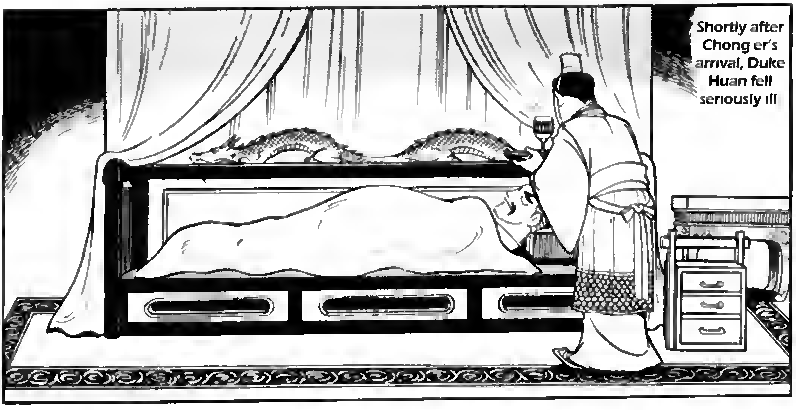


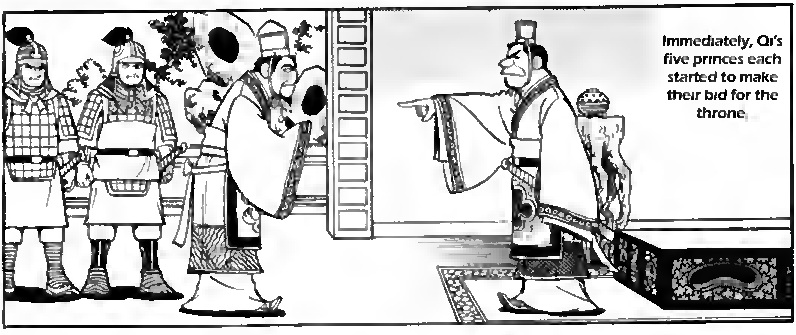
Since Guan Zhong s passing, Duke Huan had been in search of a man who could fill the former chancellor's shoes. As such, Duke Huan gave a warm welcome to Prince Chong er, who had become a political refugee in light of the succession crisis in Jin.

He wedded one of his daughters to Chong er and gave him twenty chariots as a gift

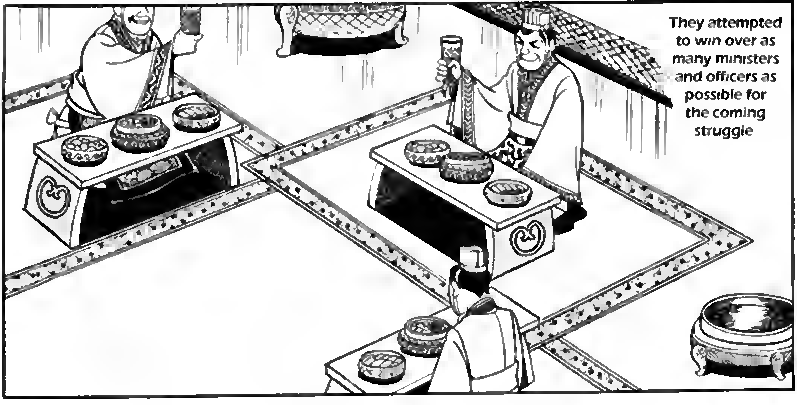
59

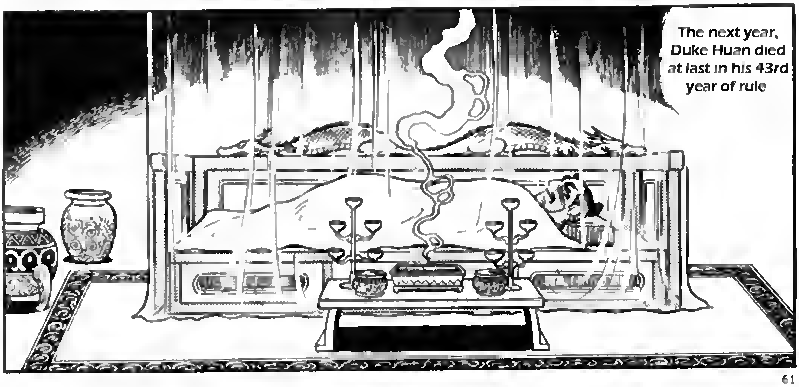
Little did anyone expect at this time that Chong er would become the third and next widely recognized hegemon.


Shortly after Chong er's arrival, Duke Huan fell seriously ill

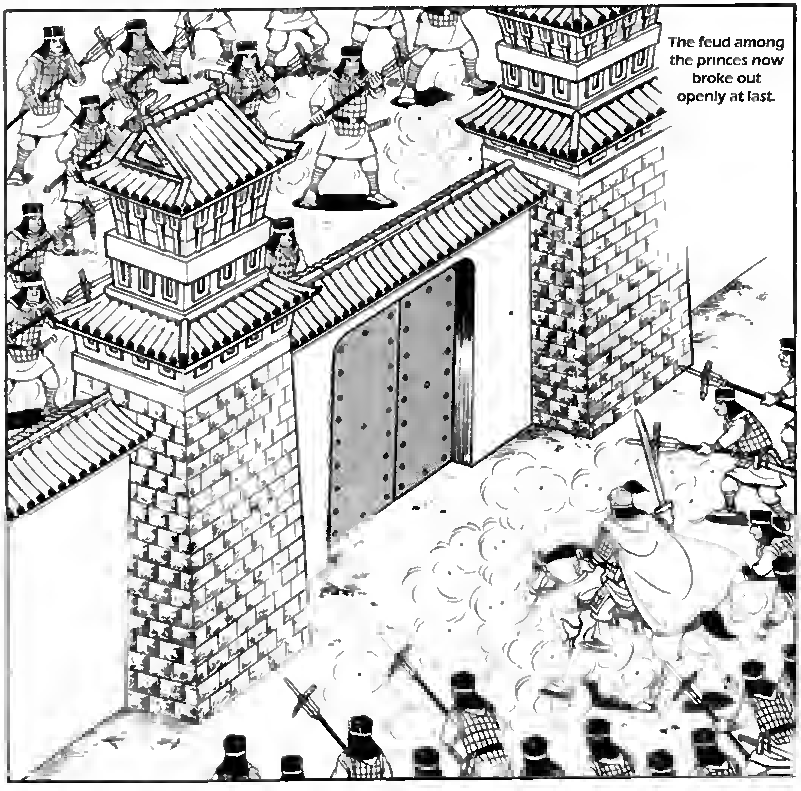

Immediately, Qi's five princes each started to make their bid for the throne

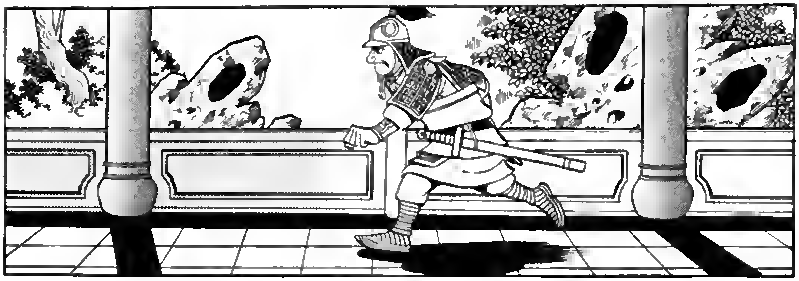
66


They attempted to win over as many ministers and officers as possible for the coming struggle


The next year, Duke Huan died at last in his 43rd year of rule

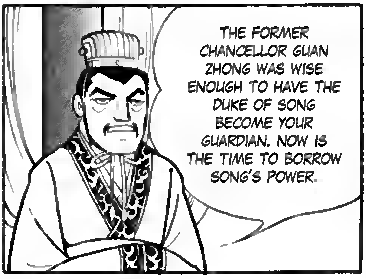
61


The feud among the princes now broke out openly at last.



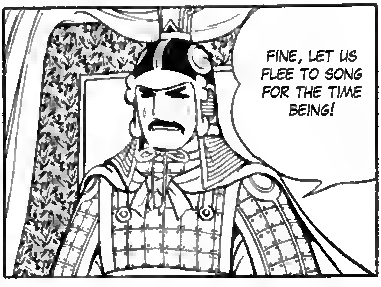
IS MY SITUATION THAT BAD ..!?
CROWN PRINCE ZHAO, WE DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH SUPPORTERS AND TROOPS TO WEATHER THE CURRENT STORM. A FEW DAYS AT MOST IF SPEAKING REALISTICALLY . I URGE YOU TO SEEK REFUGE IN SONG AT ONCE!

62


THE FORMER CHANCELLOR GUAN ZHONG WAS WISE ENOUGH TO HAVE THE DUKE OF SONG BECOME YOUR GUARDIAN. NOW IS THE TIME TO BORROW SONG'S POWER.

YI YA AND SHU DIAO HAVE BUILT UP A MUCH MORE POWERFUL FACTION TO BACK PRINCE WUGUI

YES, SIR!


FINE, LET US FLEE TO SONG FOR THE TIME BEING!

Accompanied by only a few followers, Prince Zhao managed to escape to Song.

63

As the feud among the princes unfolded, no one in Qi gave a second thought to taking care of Duke Huan s corpse still lying in his palace

Yi Ya and Shu Diao adeptly manipulated the concubines,

To call forth members of opposing factions,

64

On the spot

And ambush them,

2 months after Duke Huan's death, their heavy-handed methods succeeded in placing Prince Wugui as the new Duke of Qi
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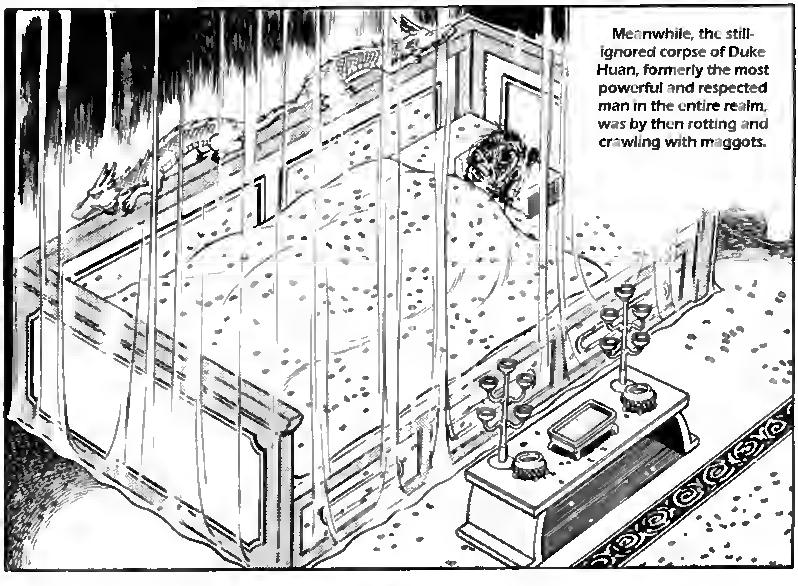
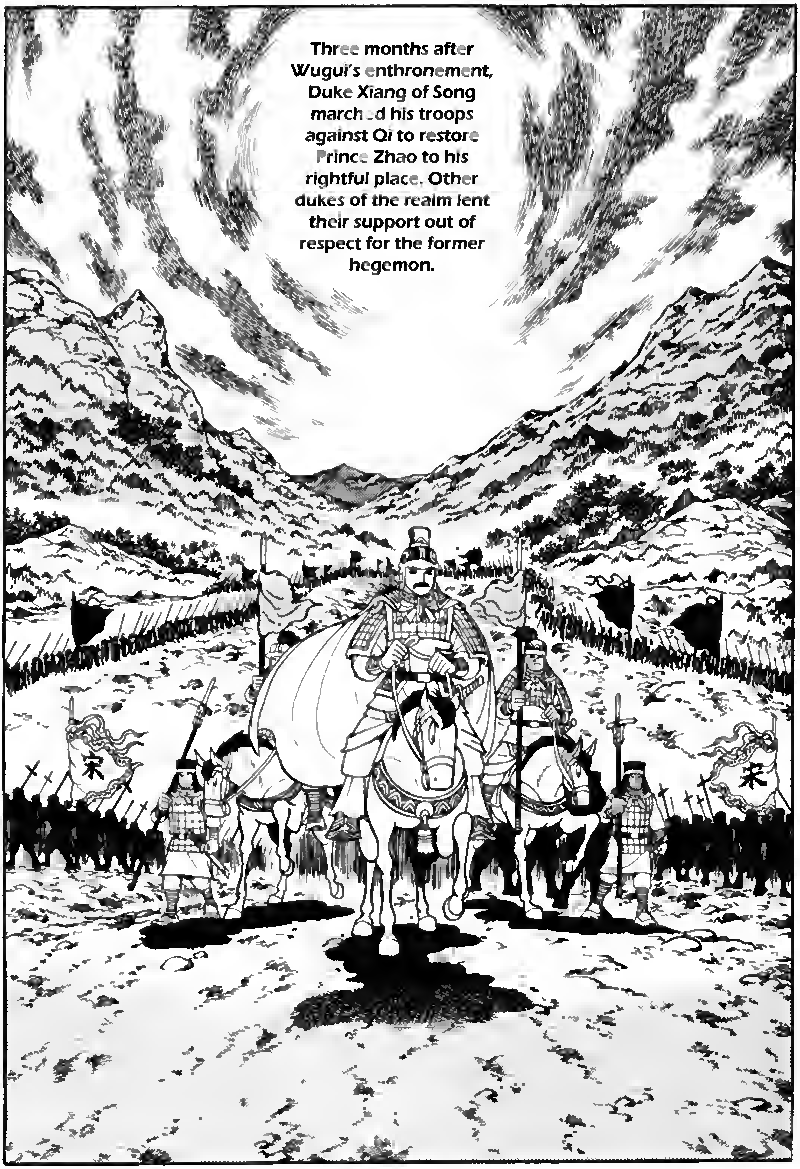

Meanwhile, the still-ignored corpse of Duke Huan, formerly the most powerful and respected man in the entire realm, was by then rotting and crawling with maggots.


Three months after Wugui's enthronement, Duke Xiang of Song marched his troops against Qi to restore Prince Zhao to his rightful place. Other dukes of the realm lent their support out of respect for the former hegemon.
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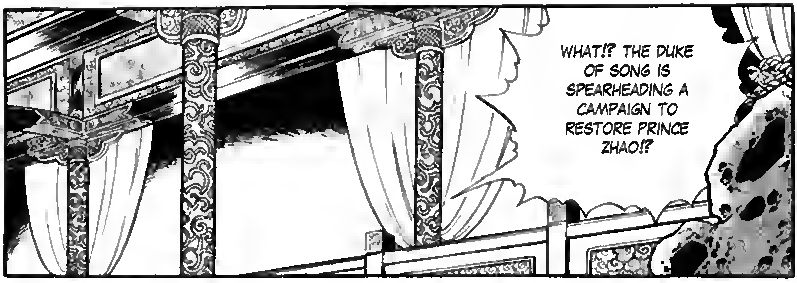

WHAT!? THE DUKE OF SONG IS SPEARHEADING A CAMPAIGN TO RESTORE PRINCE ZHAO!?

WE'LL JUST HAVE WUGUI DIE

THEN WHAT DO WE DO!?
WE CANNOT HOPE TO WIN IF ALL THE OTHER DUKES HAVE BANDED AGAINST US.

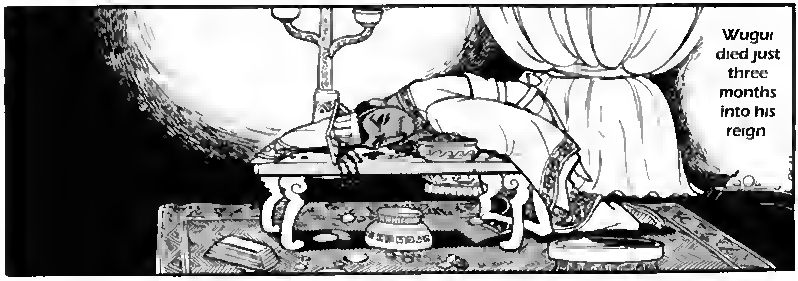
YES, WE SHOULD POISON WUGUI AT ONCE...
IT REALLY DOESN'T MATTER TO US WHOM WE SERVE AS LONG AS WE CAN GUARANTEE OUR SAFETY, AFTER ALL..!

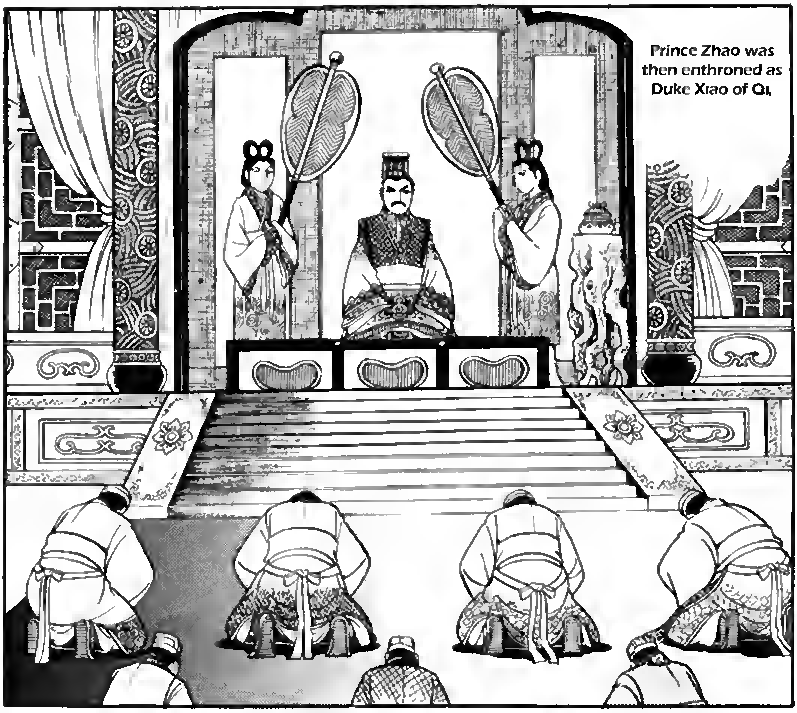
IT IS ONLY PROPER FOR THE HEGEMON'S HEIR TO HAVE THE FINEST DISHES IN THE REALM.
AH, ANOTHER FEAST!

GAHH!

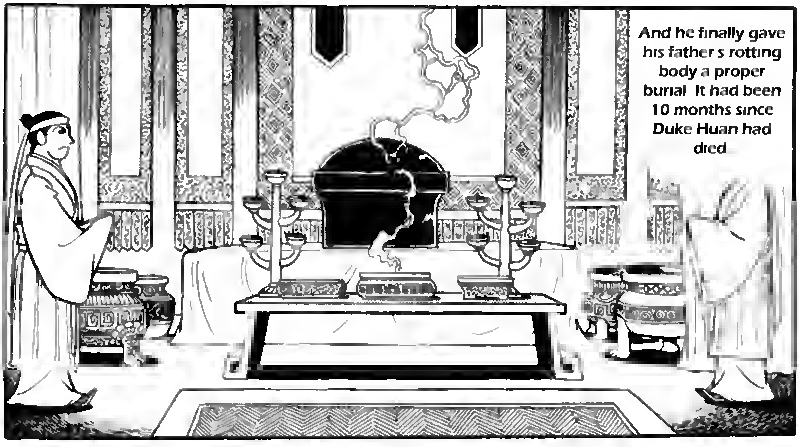
HM!?

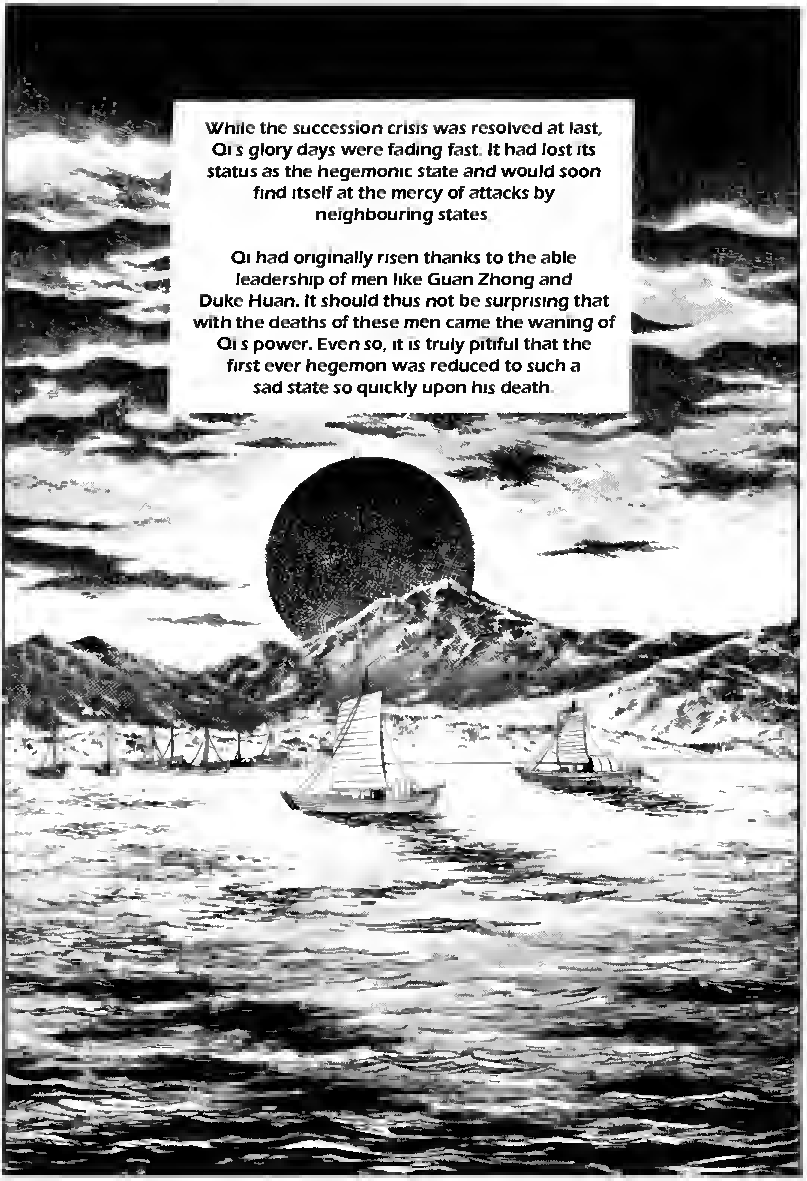
MMM!


Wuguo died just three months into his reign


Prince Zhao was then enthroned as Duke Xiao of Qi.

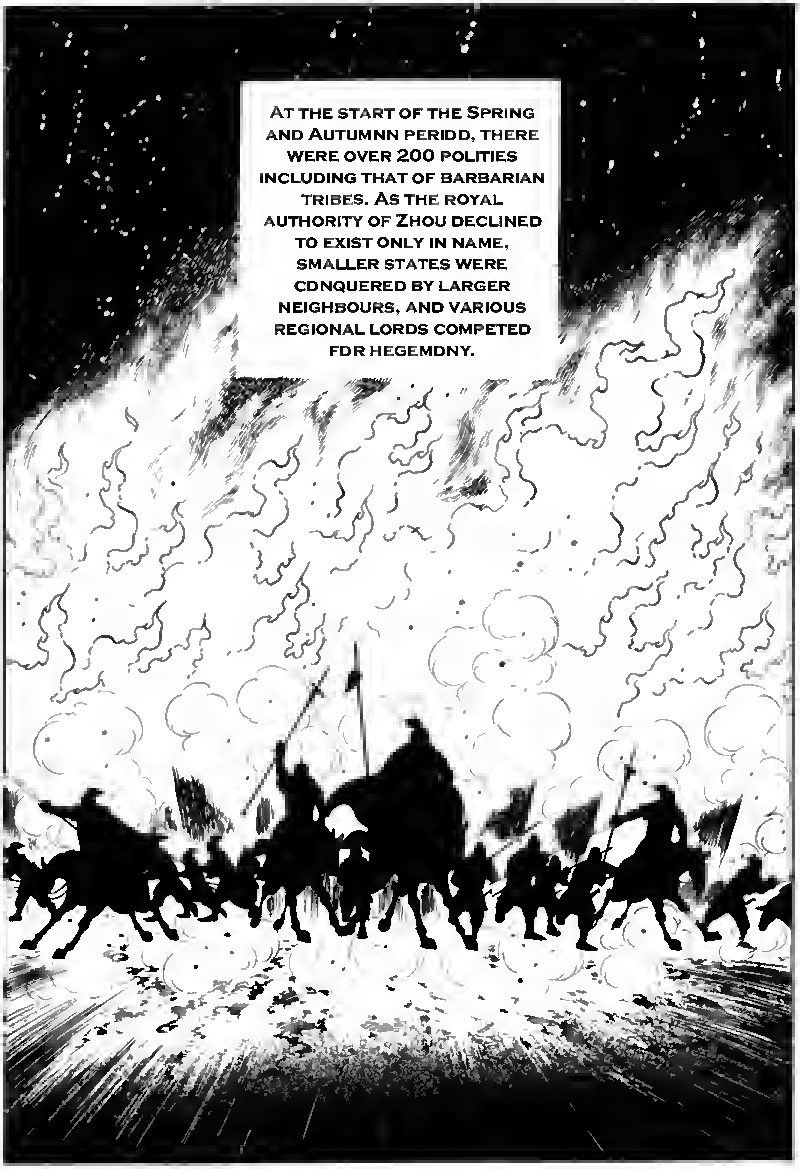
69

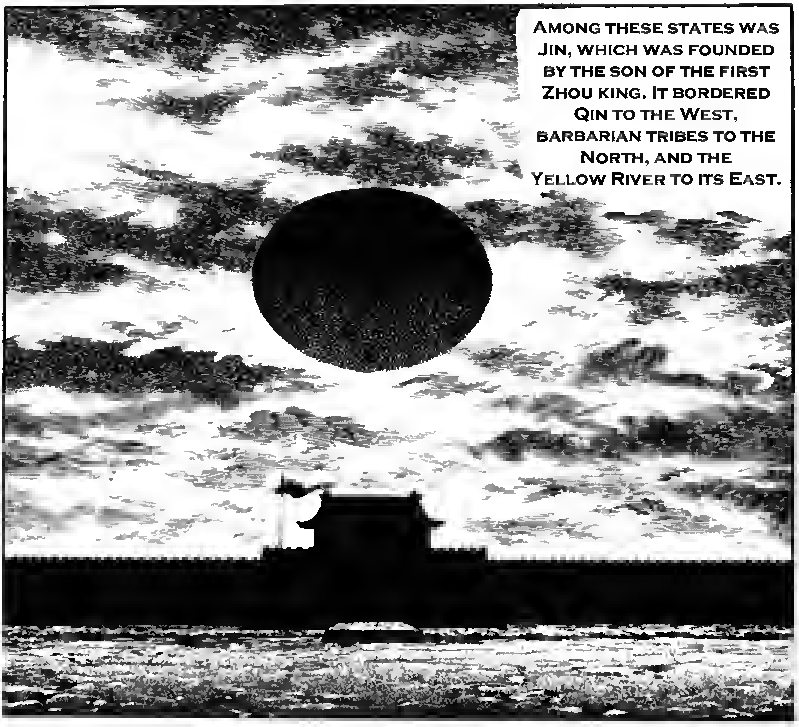

And he finally gave his father's rotting body a proper burial. It had been 10 months since Duke Huan had died.


While the succession crisis was resolved at last, Qi's glory days were fading fast. It had lost its status as the hegemonic state and would soon find itself at the mercy of attacks by neighbouring states.
Qi had originally risen thanks to the able leadership of men like Guan Zhong and Duke Huan. It should thus not be surprising that with the deaths of these men came the waning of Qi's power. Even so, it is truly pitiful that the first ever hegemon was reduced to such a sad state so quickly upon his death.

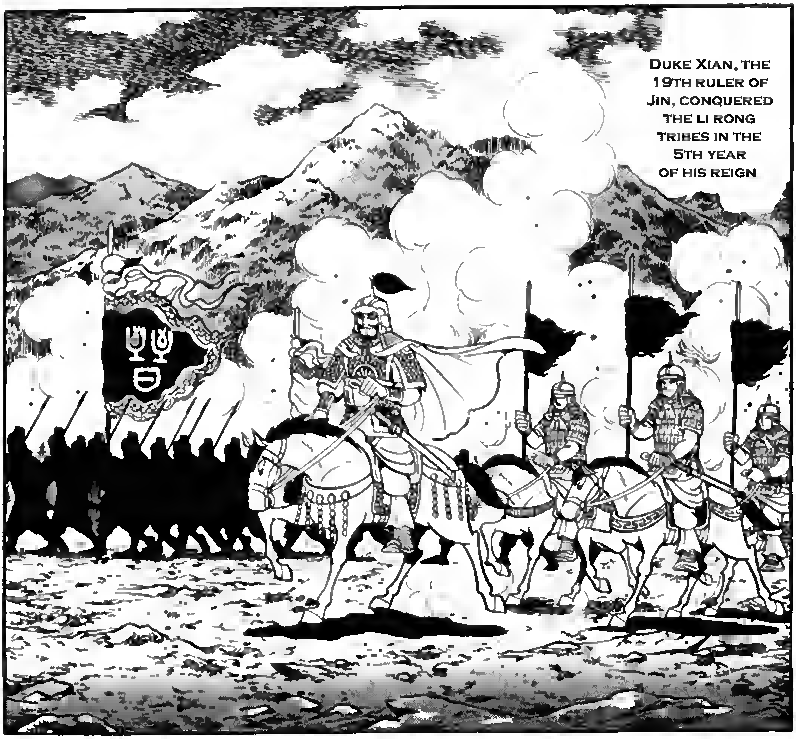
Chapter 3

Li Ji's Conspiracy


At the start of the Spring and Autumnn peridd, there were over 200 polities including that of barbarian tribes. As the royal authority of Zhou declined to exist only in name, smaller states were cdnquered by larger neighbours, and various regional lords competed fdr hegemdny.

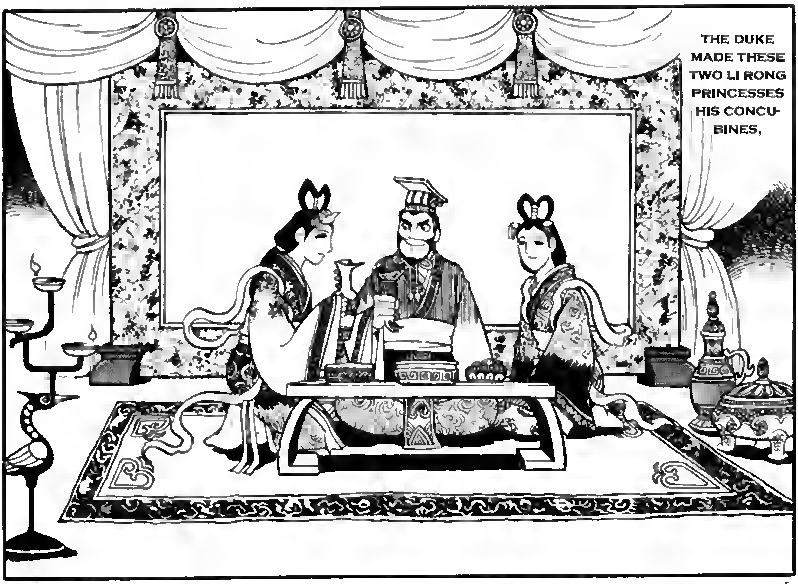

AMONG THESE STATES WAS JIN, WHICH WAS FOUNDED BY THE SON OF THE FIRST ZHOU KING. IT BORDERED QIN TO THE WEST, BARBARIAN TRIBES TO THE NORTH, AND THE YELLOW RIVER TO ITS EAST.

MAP OF MAJOR STATES AND CITIES OF THE SPRING AND AUTUMN PERIOD

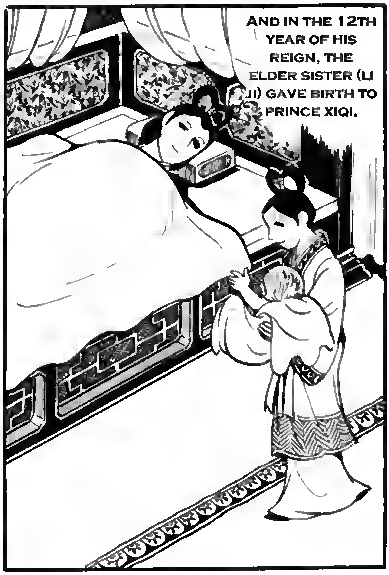

DUKE XIAN, THE 19TH RULER OF JIN, CONQUERED THE LI RONG TRIBES IN THE 5TH YEAR OF HIS REIGN

4

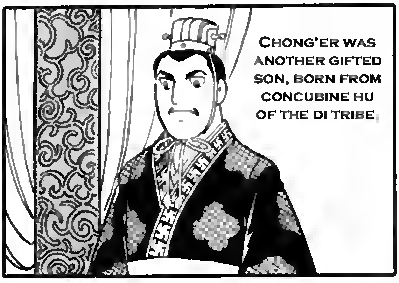
IN DOING SO, HE CAPTURED TWO SISTER PRINCESSES

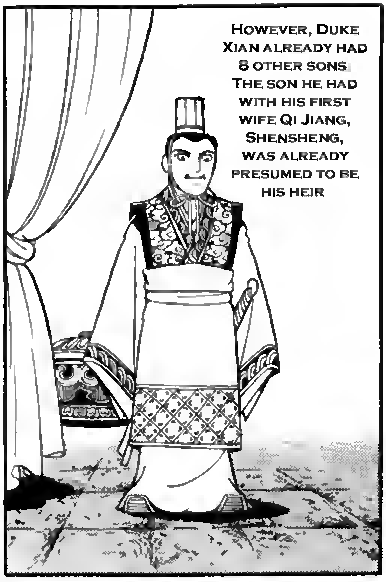


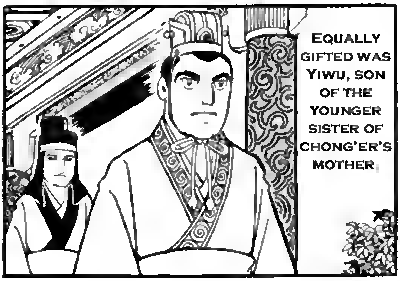
LI JI: NOT A PROPER NAME. AS IT LITERALLY MEANS CONCUBINE LI, WHERE LI REFERS TO THE LI RONG TRIBE



Di: general term for northwestern barbarian tribes

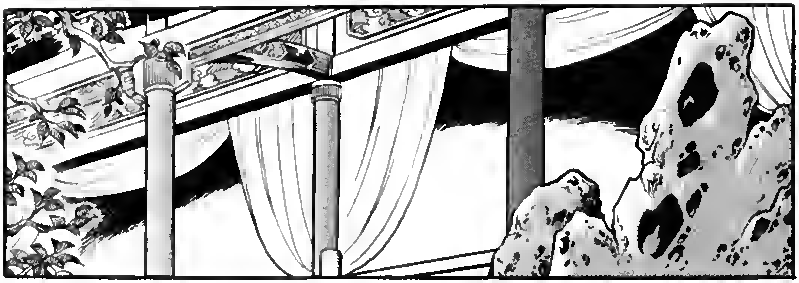



However, Duke Xian already had 8 other sons. The son he had with his first wife Qi Jiang, Shensheng, was already presumed to be his heir.

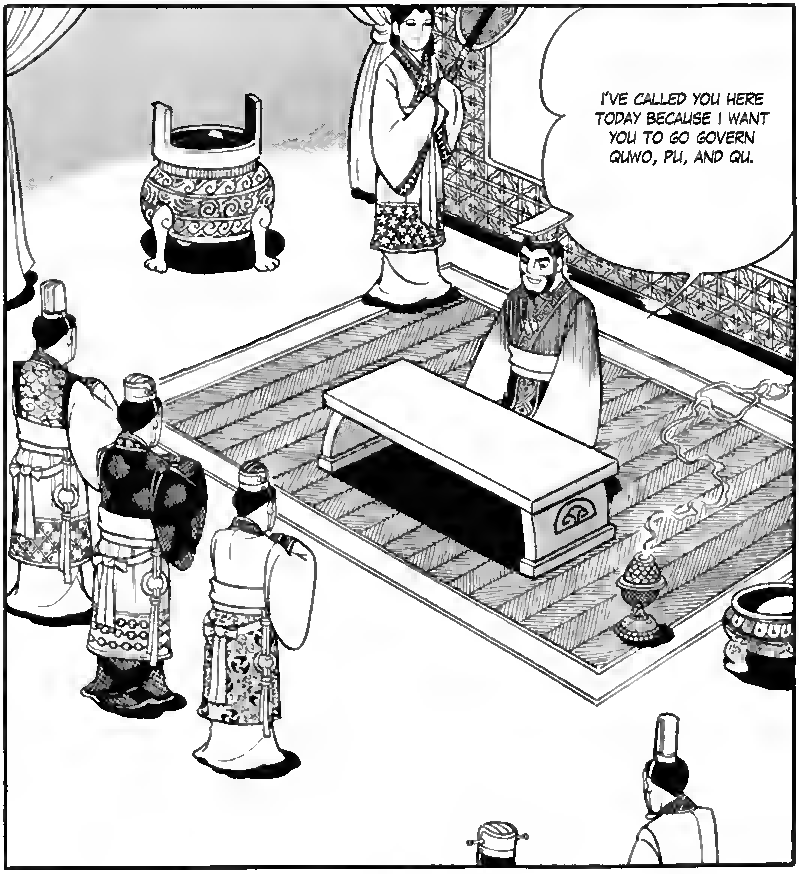


6

I'll first have to get them to grow familiar with, and come to like Xiqi.
These three sons of mine already command respect and trust from my retainers. Were I to openly state I wish to name Xiqi as my heir, they'll surely all band together in opposition.

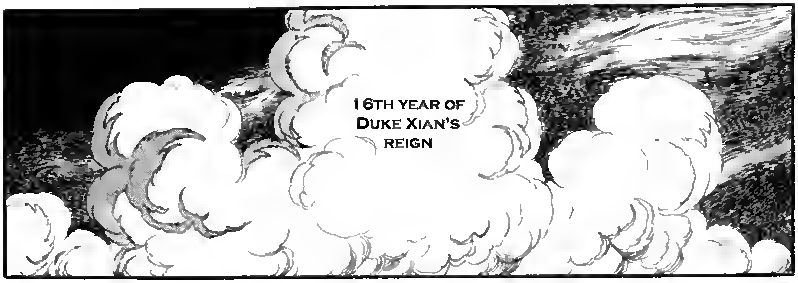


7


I'VE CALLED YOU HERE TODAY BECAUSE I WANT YOU TO GO GOVERN QUWO, PU, AND QU.

THUS, I LEAVE QUWO IN SHENSHENG'S HANDS, WHILE CHONG'ER AND YIWU WILL TAKE CARE OF PU AND QU RESPECTIVELY.
AS YOU LIKELY KNOW, QUWO IS AN ANCESTRAL LAND OF OUR HOUSE, WHILE PU AND QU ARE BORDER TOWNS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE. THE SECURITY OF THESE THREE PLACES IS CRITICAL FOR PEACE IN JIN.
YES, FATHER
YES, MY LORD?
SHI WEI.
AS YOU WISH
I WANT YOU TO GO BUILD UP WALLS IN THE PLACES I'VE ASSIGNED MY SONS TO JUST NOW.

THAT IS ALL. YOU MAY EXCUSE YOURSELVES NOW.
IT COULDN'T BE THAT HE'S PLANNING ON REMOVING SHENSHENG AS HIS HEIR, COULD IT...?
WHY IS HE SENDING HIS THREE SONS TO SUCH FAR PLACES ALL OF A SUDDEN...?
FOR THE TIME BEING, I'LL TRY TO DELAY THE PRINCES' DEPARTURES AND THE ORDER TO BUILD UP THE WALLS SO I CAN BUY TIME TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THE DUKE IS REALLY PLANNING...
WHO WOULD HE EVEN NAME HIS NEW HEIR IN THAT CASE THEN .?

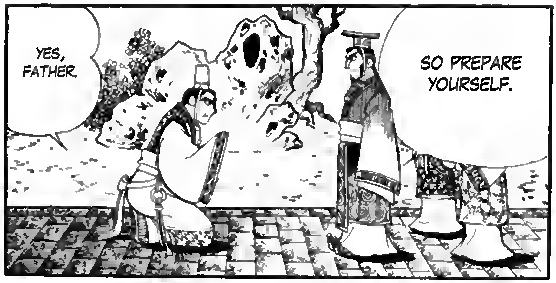

16TH YEAR OF
DUKE XIAN'S
REIGN

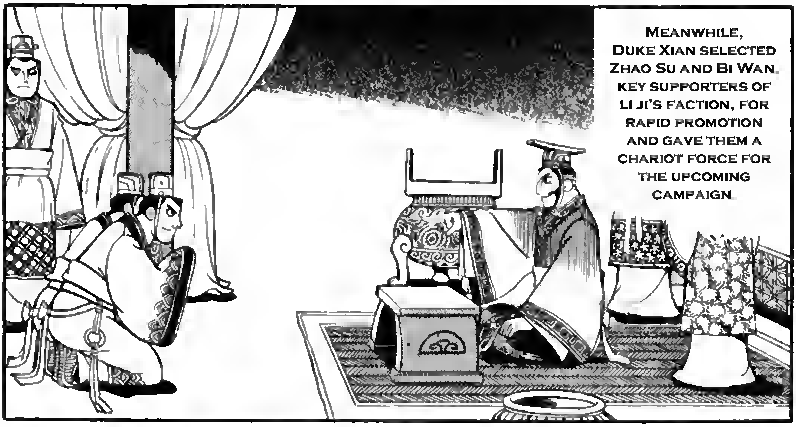
TOWARDS WHERE?
SHENSHENG, I AM CURRENTLY PLANNING ON EXPANDING JIN'S TERRITORY.

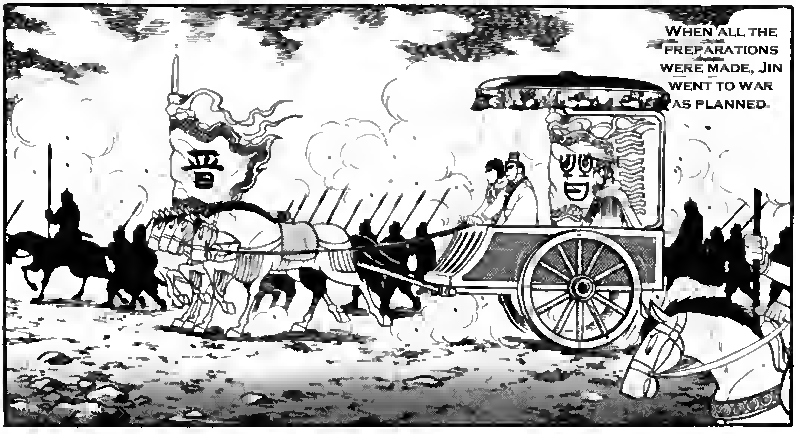
10

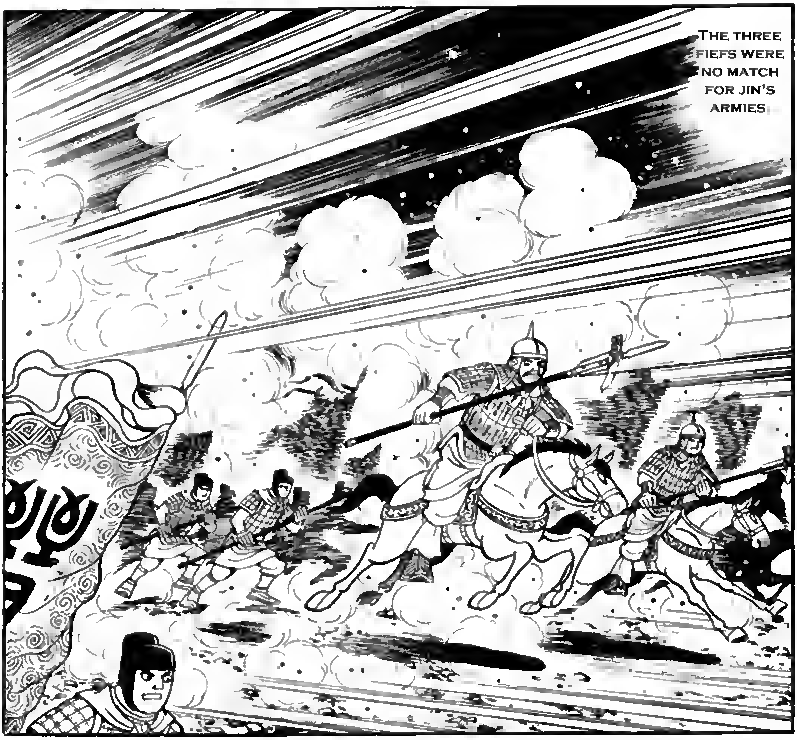
I PLAN ON ORGANIZING TWO FORCES FOR THESE CAMPAIGNS. I WILL TAKE COMMAND OF THE FIRST ARMY WHILE I WILL APPOINT YOU TO LEAD THE SECOND ARMY.

I'LL START BY TAKING OVER THE FIEFS OF HUO, WEI, AND GENG.

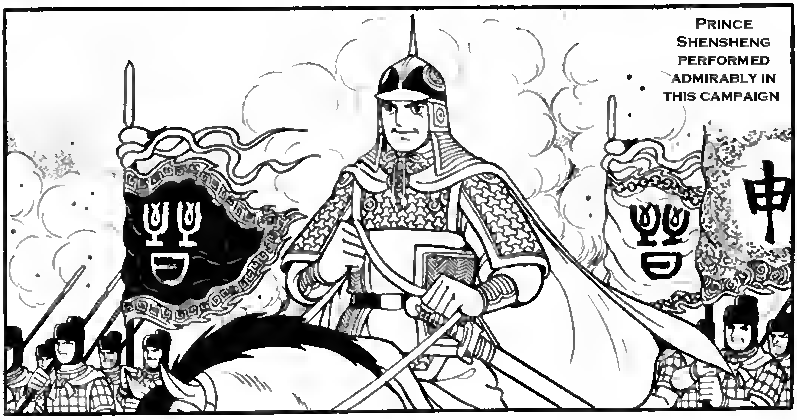

YES, FATHER.
SO PREPARE YOURSELF.

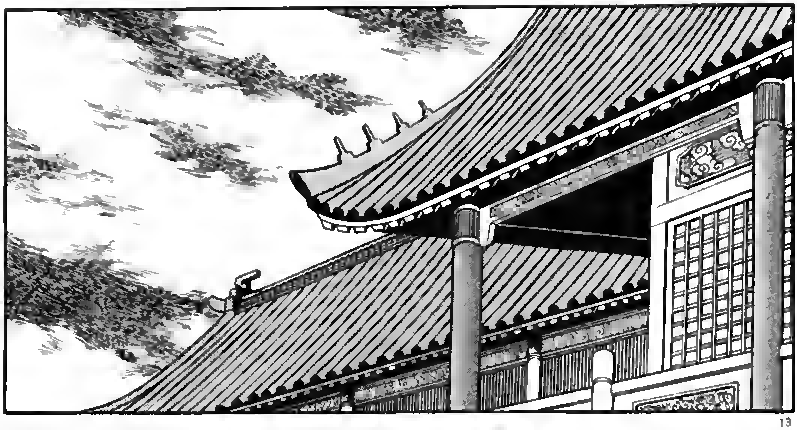

MEANWHILE, DUKE XIAN SELECTED ZHAO SU AND BI WAN, KEY SUPPORTERS OF LI JI'S FACTION, FOR RAPID PROMOTION AND GAVE THEM A CHARIOT FORCE FOR THE UPCOMING CAMPAIGN.


WHEN ALL THE PREPARATIONS WERE MADE, JIN WENT TO WAR AS PLANNED.

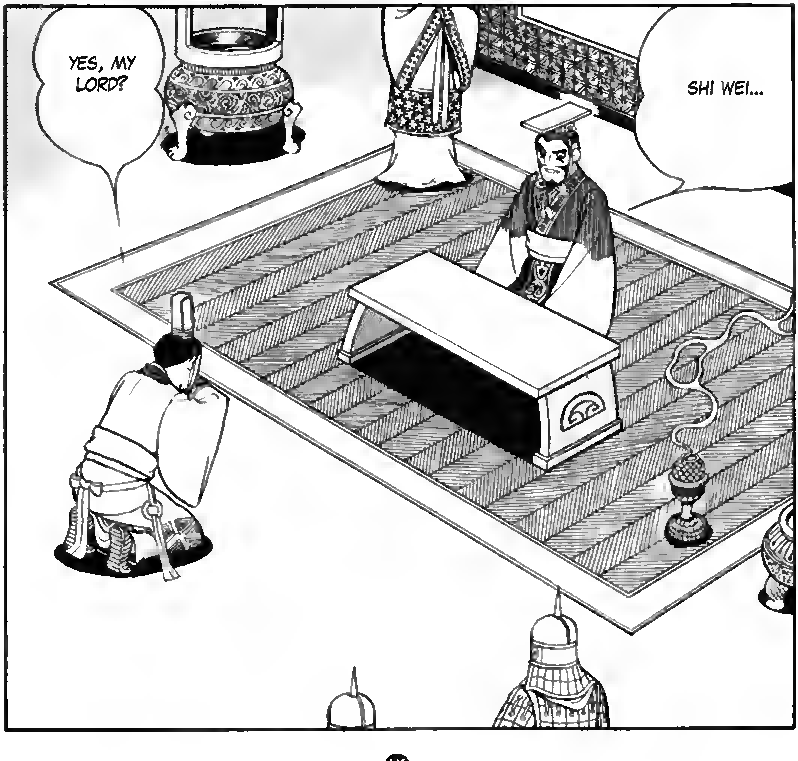

THE THREE FIEFS WERE NO MATCH FOR JIN'S ARMIES

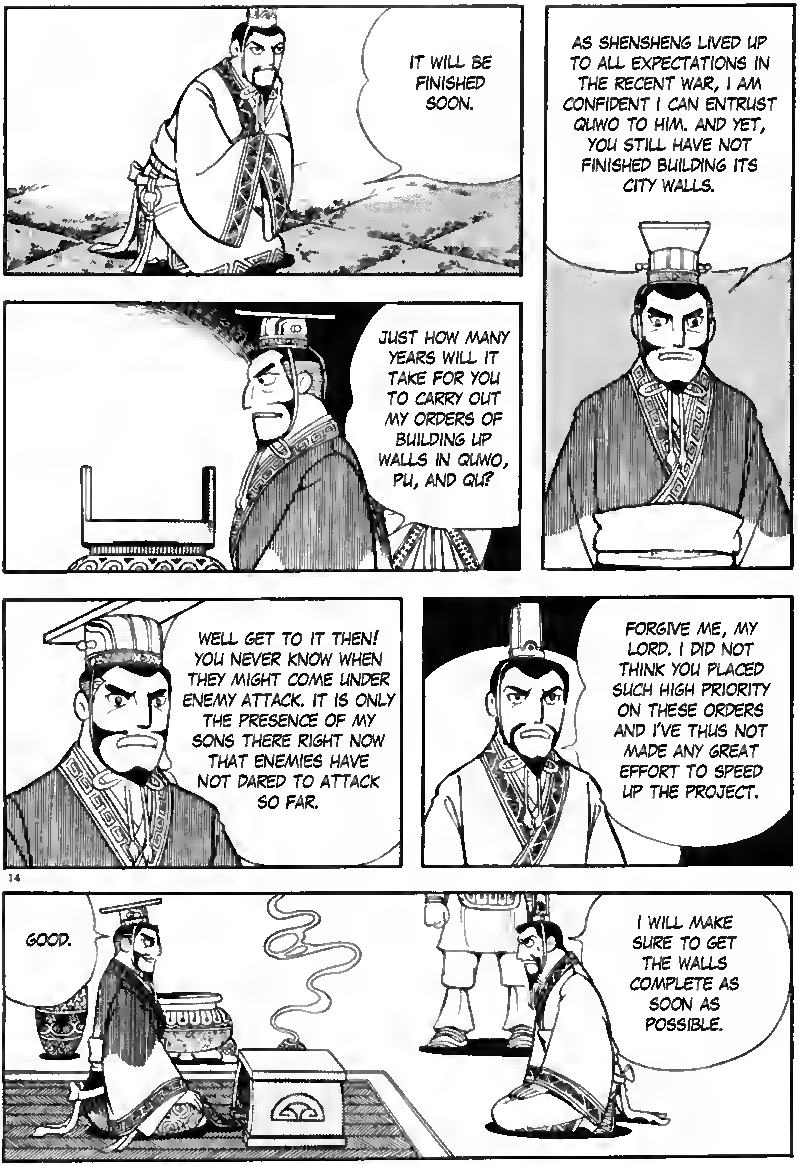
12

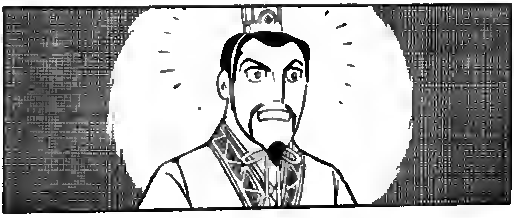

PRINCE SHENSHENG PERFORMED ADMIRABLY IN THIS CAMPAIGN



13




IT WILL BE FINISHED SOON.
AS SHENSHENG LIVED UP TO ALL EXPECTATIONS IN THE RECENT WAR, I AM CONFIDENT I CAN ENTRUST QUWO TO HIM. AND YET, YOU STILL HAVE NOT FINISHED BUILDING ITS CITY WALLS.
JUST HOW MANY YEARS WILL IT TAKE FOR YOU TO CARRY OUT MY ORDERS OF BUILDING UP WALLS IN QUWO, PU, AND QU?
WELL GET TO IT THEN! YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN THEY MIGHT COME UNDER ENEMY ATTACK. IT IS ONLY THE PRESENCE OF MY SONS THERE RIGHT NOW THAT ENEMIES HAVE NOT DARED TO ATTACK SO FAR.
FORGIVE ME, MY LORD. I DID NOT THINK YOU PLACED SUCH HIGH PRIORITY ON THESE ORDERS AND I'VE THUS NOT MADE ANY GREAT EFFORT TO SPEED UP THE PROJECT.
GOOD.
I WILL MAKE SURE TO GET THE WALLS COMPLETE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.



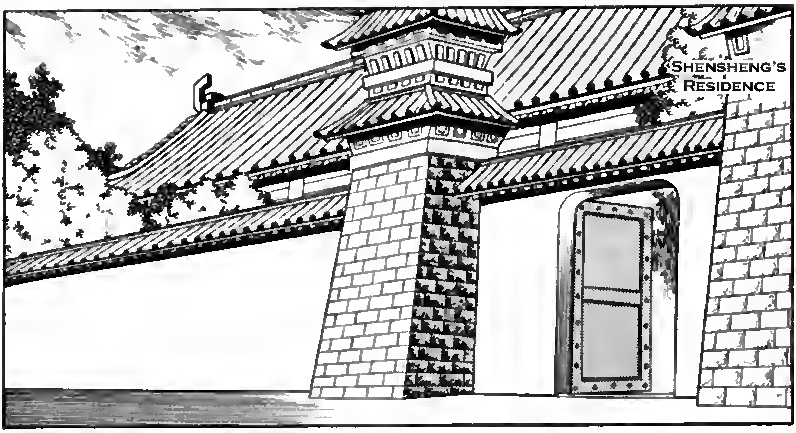
ZHAO SU. BI WAN. I OWE THE RECENT VICTORY IN BATTLE TO YOUR CHARIOTS. AS SUCH, I REWARD YOU WITH THE CONQUERED LANDS OF GENG AND WEI, RESPECTIVELY.

THANK YOU, MY LORD
I AM HONOURED, MY LORD!

YOU MAY NOW EXCUSE YOURSELVES

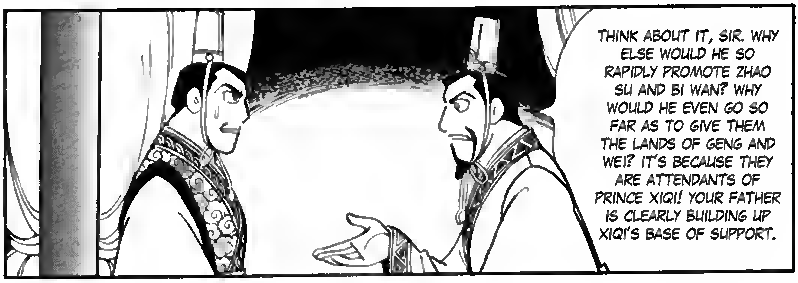
15

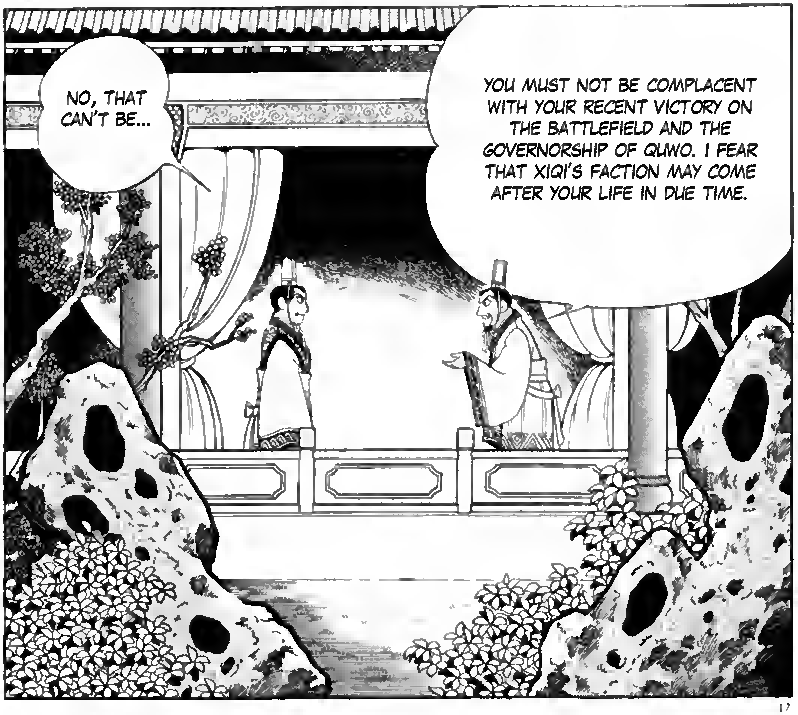
I SEE WHAT HE'S PLANNING NOW...! HE INTENDS ON MAKING XIQI HIS HEIR!


Shensheng's Residence

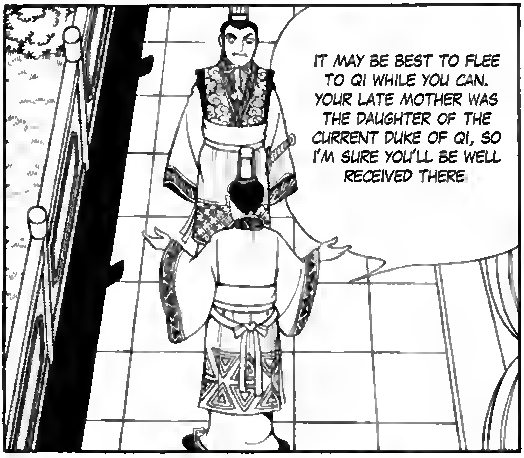
SSH! YOUR VOICE IS TOO LOUD, SIR
WHAT!? HE PLANS ON REPLACING ME AS CROWN PRINCE...!?

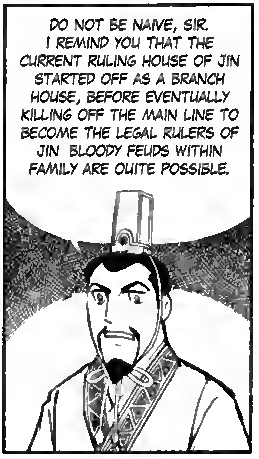
16


THINK ABOUT IT, SIR. WHY ELSE WOULD HE SO RAPIDLY PROMOTE ZHAO SU AND BI WAN? WHY WOULD HE EVEN GO SO FAR AS TO GIVE THEM THE LANDS OF GENG AND WEI? IT'S BECAUSE THEY ARE ATTENDANTS OF PRINCE XIQI! YOUR FATHER IS CLEARLY BUILDING UP XIQI'S BASE OF SUPPORT.

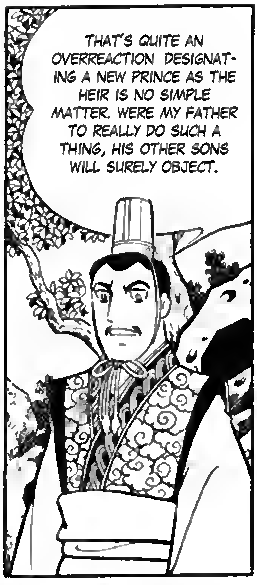

NO, THAT CAN'T BE...
YOU MUST NOT BE COMPLACENT WITH YOUR RECENT VICTORY ON THE BATTLEFIELD AND THE GOVERNORSHIP OF QUWO. I FEAR THAT XIQI'S FACTION MAY COME AFTER YOUR LIFE IN DUE TIME.

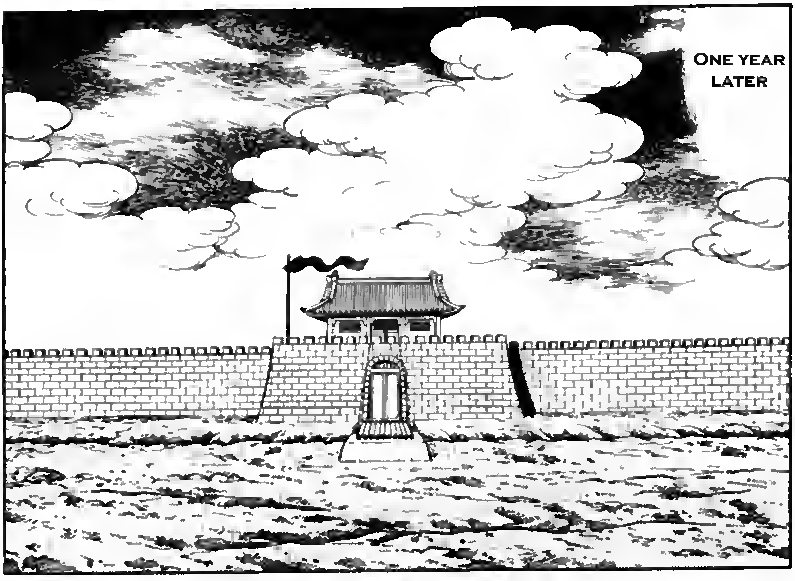
17

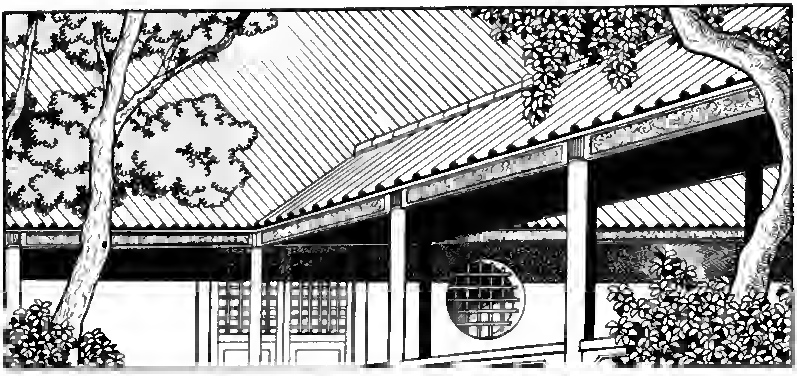

IT MAY BE BEST TO FLEE TO QI WHILE YOU CAN. YOUR LATE MOTHER WAS THE DAUGHTER OF THE CURRENT DUKE OF QI, SO I'M SURE YOU'LL BE WELL RECEIVED THERE


DO NOT BE NAIVE, SIR. I REMIND YOU THAT THE CURRENT RULING HOUSE OF JIN STARTED OFF AS A BRANCH HOUSE, BEFORE EVENTUALLY KILLING OFF THE MAIN LINE TO BECOME THE LEGAL RULERS OF JIN. BLOODY FEUDS WITHIN FAMILY ARE QUITE POSSIBLE.

VERY WELL, SIR.
I WILL PRETEND THAT WE DID NOT HAVE THIS CONVERSATION JUST NOW, SHI WEI.

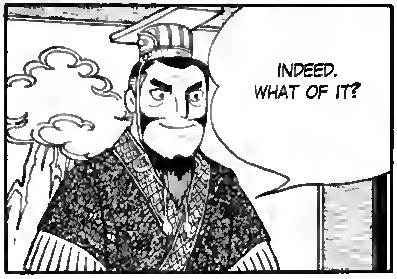

THAT'S QUITE AN OVERREACTION. DESIGNATING A NEW PRINCE AS THE HEIR IS NO SIMPLE MATTER. WERE MY FATHER TO REALLY DO SUCH A THING, HIS OTHER SONS WILL SURELY OBJECT.


ONE YEAR LATER

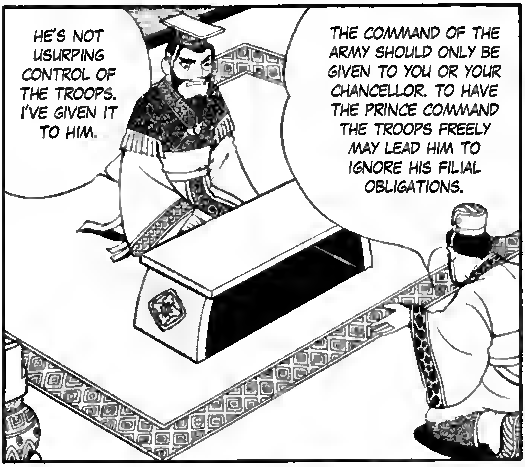


WHAT IS IT, LI KE?
I CAME TO DISCUSS A CERTAIN MATTER, MY LORD.

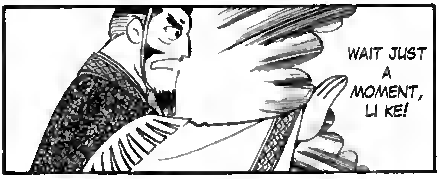
19


INDEED. WHAT OF IT?

IS IT TRUE THAT YOU ORDERED CROWN PRINCE SHENSHENG TO LEAD THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE DI TRIBES OF DONGSHAN?

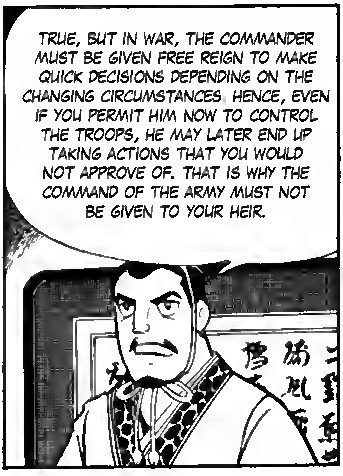

HE'S NOT USURPING CONTROL OF THE TROOPS. I'VE GIVEN IT TO HIM.
THE COMMAND OF THE ARMY SHOULD ONLY BE GIVEN TO YOU OR YOUR CHANCELLOR. TO HAVE THE PRINCE COMMAND THE TROOPS FREELY MAY LEAD HIM TO IGNORE HIS FILIAL OBLIGATIONS.

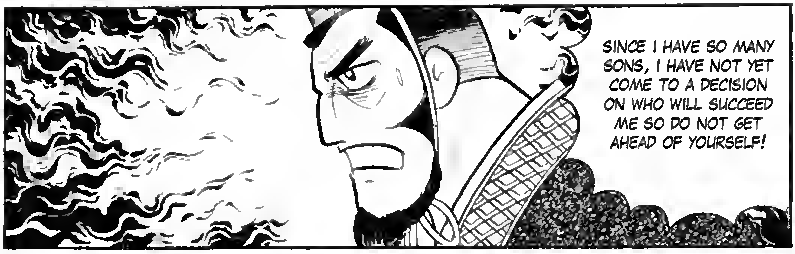
I AM AFRAID I MUST POINT OUT THAT IS IMPROPER FOR THE PRINCE. TRADITIONAL CUSTOMS DICTATE THAT THE PRINCE OVERSEES RITUAL OFFERINGS TO ENSURE GOOD FORTUNE FOR HIS FATHER. IN TIMES OF WAR, HIS PROPER PLACE IS TO GUARD THE REALM WHILE YOU ARE OUT FIGHTING.

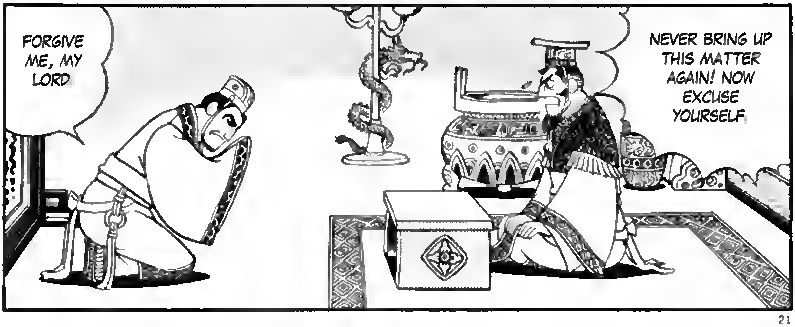

WAIT JUST A MOMENT, LI KE!

20

YOUR ENTIRE ARGUMENT HINGES UPON THE ASSUMPTION THAT SHENSHENG IS MY HEIR.


TRUE, BUT IN WAR, THE COMMANDER MUST BE GIVEN FREE REIGN TO MAKE QUICK DECISIONS DEPENDING ON THE CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES. HENCE, EVEN IF YOU PERMIT HIM NOW TO CONTROL THE TROOPS, HE MAY LATER END UP TAKING ACTIONS THAT YOU WOULD NOT APPROVE OF. THAT IS WHY THE COMMAND OF THE ARMY MUST NOT BE GIVEN TO YOUR HEIR.

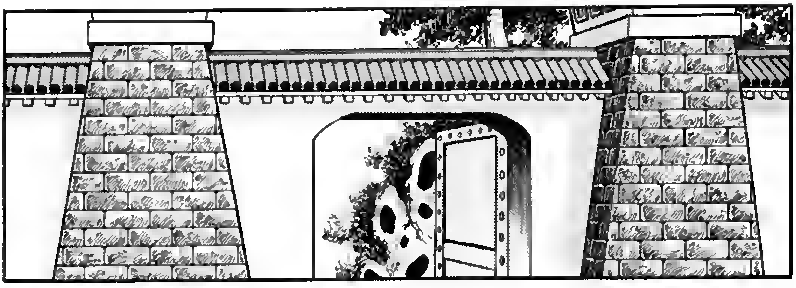

SINCE I HAVE SO MANY SONS, I HAVE NOT YET COME TO A DECISION ON WHO WILL SUCCEED ME SO DO NOT GET AHEAD OF YOURSELF!


FORGIVE ME, MY LORD
NEVER BRING UP THIS MATTER AGAIN! NOW EXCUSE YOURSELF

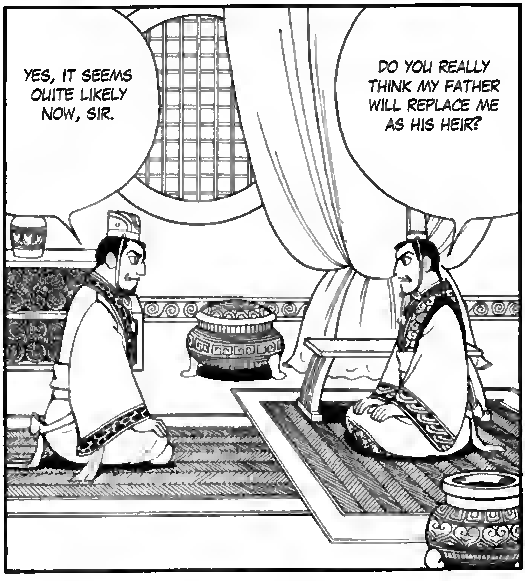
21

IT IS THE DUTY OF WE MINISTERS TO PREVENT SUCH A SCENARIO FROM HAPPENING
IN THE LAST DAYS OF THE SHANG DYNASTY, KING ZHOU WAS BEWITCHED BY HIS WICKED WIFE, DAJI, WHICH LED TO THE DYNASTY'S FALL.

THE RUMOURS MUST BE TRUE. HE CLEARLY INTENDS ON MAKING XIQI HIS HEIR, WHICH IS WHY HE'S GIVING SHENSHENG ALL THESE TASKS. HE'S JUST WAITING FOR THE DAY THAT SHENSHENG SLIPS UP.

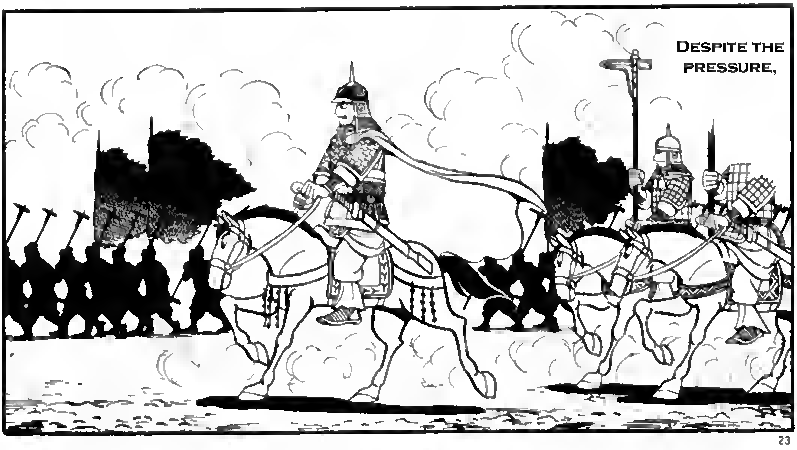


YOUR ONLY CHOICE NOW IS TO LEAD THE DONGSHAN CAMPAIGN FLAWLESSLY AND SURPASS HIS EXPECTATIONS.

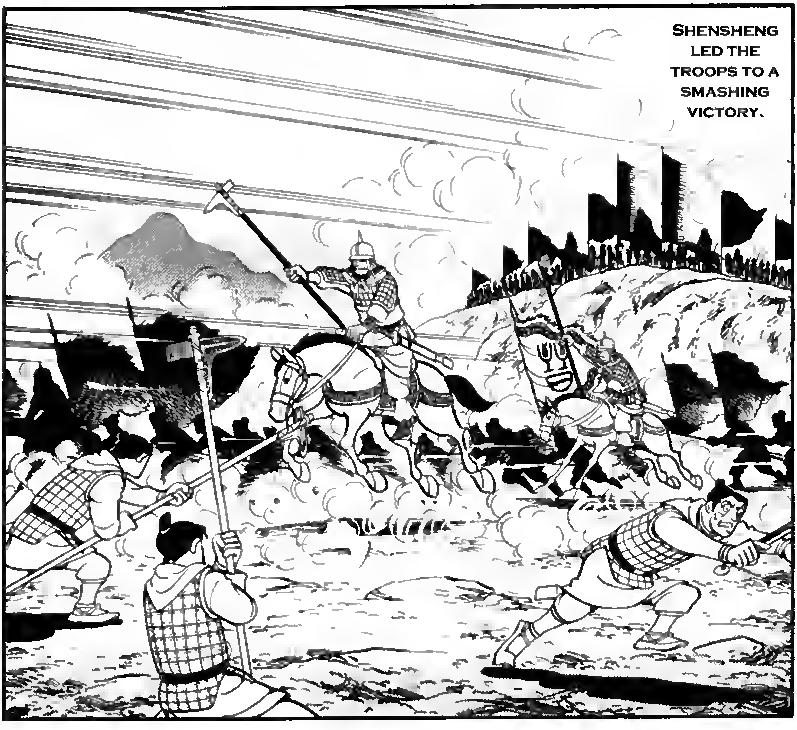

YES, IT SEEMS QUITE LIKELY NOW, SIR.
DO YOU REALLY THINK MY FATHER WILL REPLACE ME AS HIS HEIR?

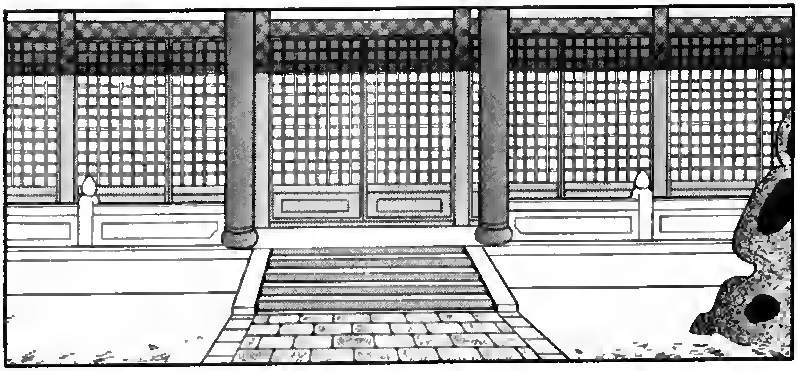
22

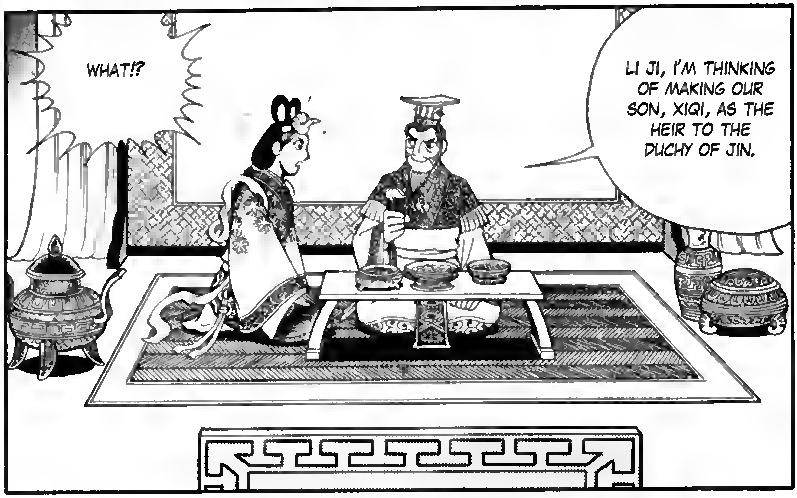
FINE, I WILL DO AS YOU SAY...
AS LONG AS YOU LIVE A MORALLY EXEMPLARY LIFE AND DO NOT SLIP UP, NO ONE WILL ABLE TO OBJECT TO YOU. YOUR FATHER MAY EVEN COME TO CHANGE HIS MIND.


DESPITE THE PRESSURE,

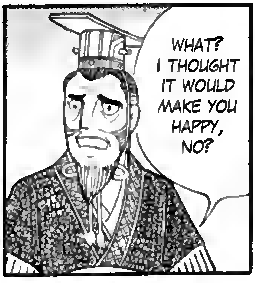
23


SHENSHENG LED THE TROOPS TO A SMASHING VICTORY.




WHAT!?
LI JI, I'M THINKING OF MAKING OUR SON, XIQI, AS THE HEIR TO THE DUCHY OF JIN.

EVERYONE ALREADY KNOWS SHENSHENG TO BE THE NEXT DUKE OF JIN.


WHAT? I THOUGHT IT WOULD MAKE YOU HAPPY, NO?

YOU MUSTN'T!

THEN WILL YOU MAKE SHENSHENG YOUR HEIR?

WAIT, WAIT! DO NOT GET AHEAD OF YOURSELF!
WITH ALL HIS VICTORIES IN BATTLE, PRINCE SHENSHENG ALREADY HAS THE TRUST OF YOUR RETAINERS AND THE POPULACE. WERE YOU TO CHANGE YOUR MIND SIMPLY FOR THE SAKE OF A WOMAN, THE DISGRACE WOULD FORCE ME TO COMMIT SUICIDE.

WELL, IF YOU INSIST...

THANK YOU, MY DEAR.
NOW THEN, I HEAR THIS DISH DOES WONDERS FOR PROMOTING LONGEVITY. I PRAY IT WILL BESTOW YOU WITH MANY HEALTHY YEARS TO COME.

THANK YOU. I CANNOT BEAR THE THOUGHT OF BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR REMOVING SHENSHENG AND THEREBY BRINGING DISGRACE UPON YOUR NAME.

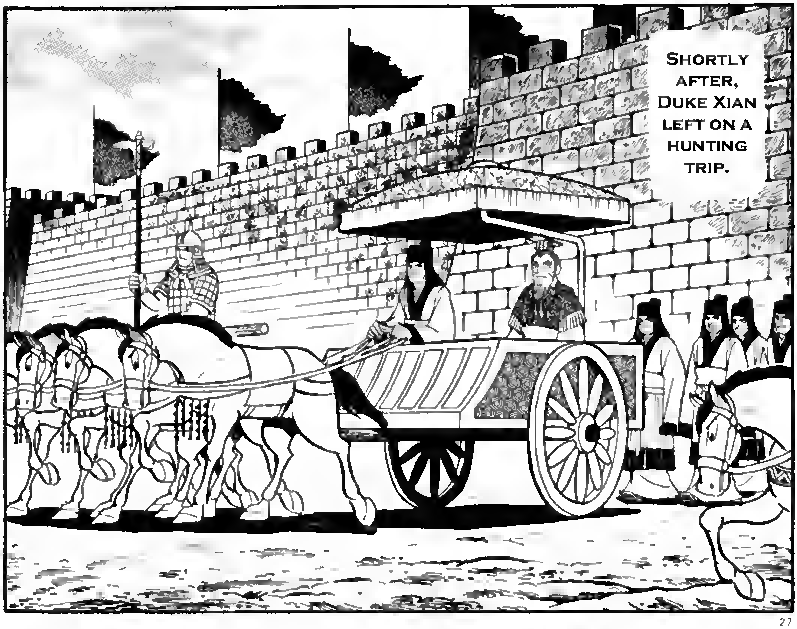
25

YES...
THERE, THERE. STOP YOUR TEARS NOW...

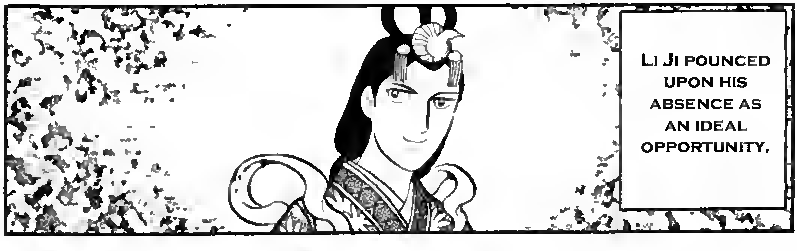
Li Ji's tears, however, was merely a cover for her malice against Shensheng. Unbeknownst to Duke Xian, she had been busy using her aides to spread ill rumours about Shensheng.

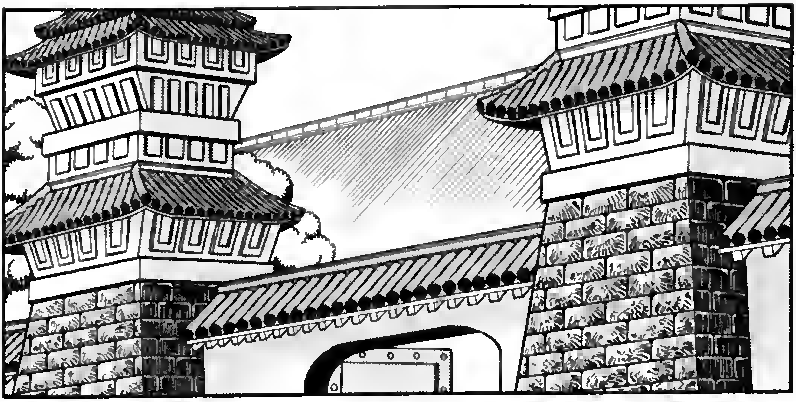
Two years later...

I MUST TAKE MORE DRASTIC ACTION...

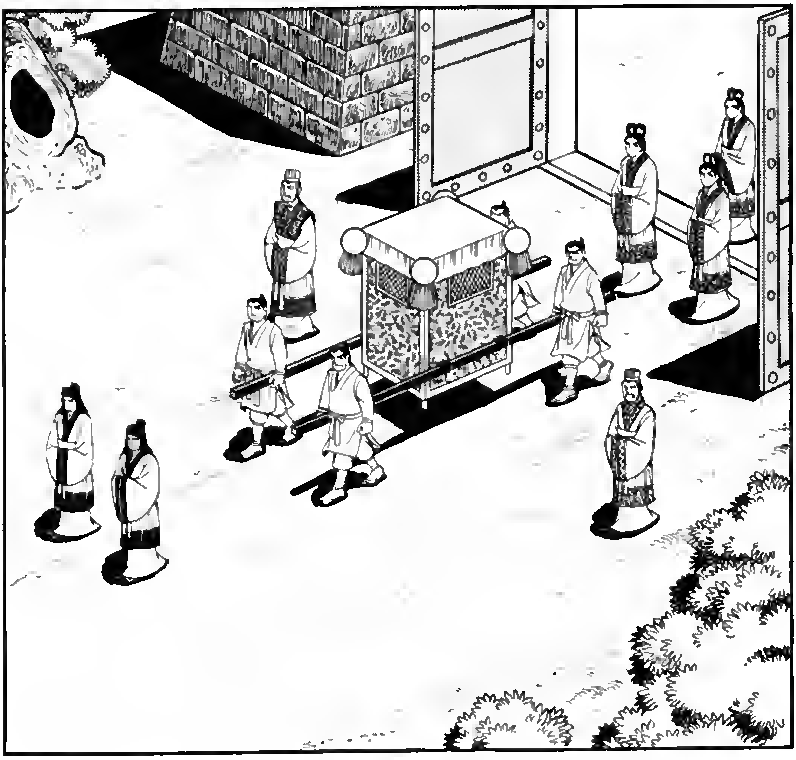

SHORTLY AFTER, DUKE XIAN LEFT ON A HUNTING TRIP.

27


LI JI POUNCED UPON HIS ABSENCE AS AN IDEAL OPPORTUNITY.

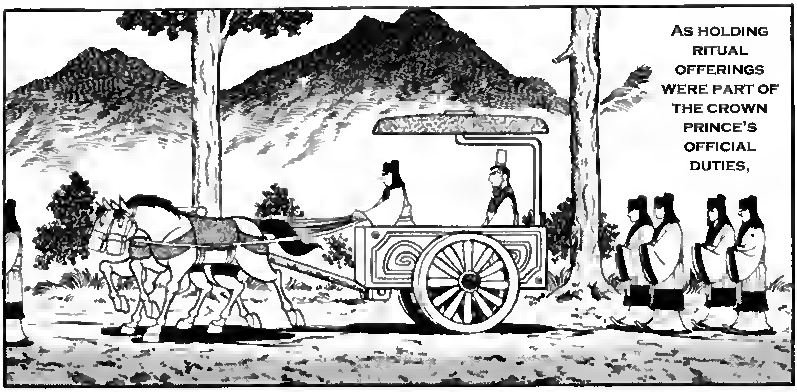


28

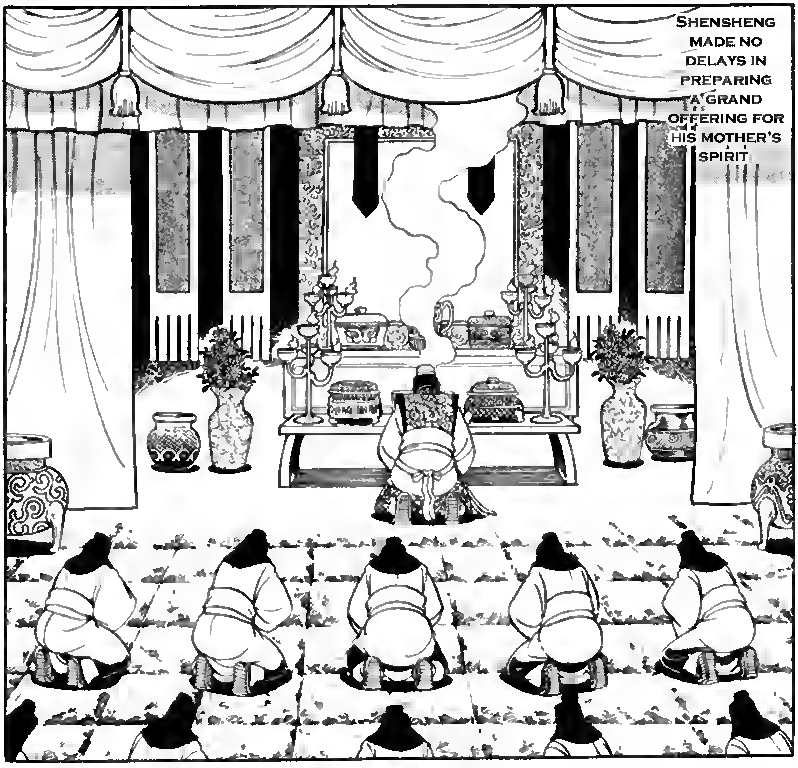


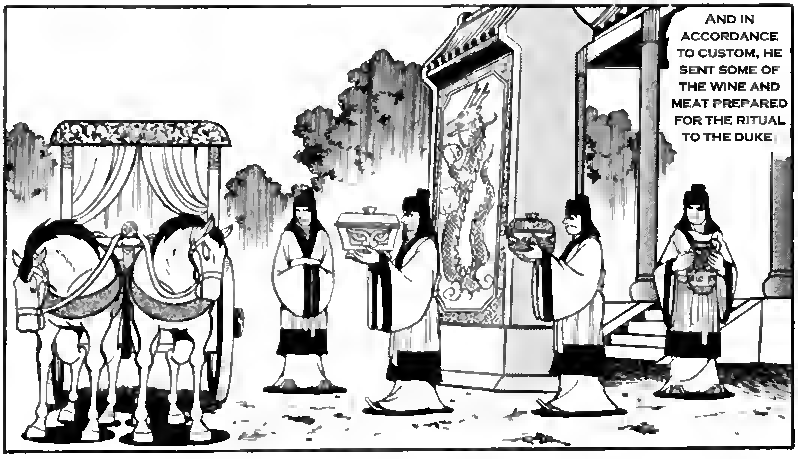
MADAM LI JI?
OH, THAT WOULD BE DISRESPECTFUL TO THE CROWN PRINCE.
HAD YOU SENT NOTICE, I WOULD HAVE GLADLY PAID YOU A VISIT RATHER THAN HAVING YOU COME ALL THE WAY OUT HERE...
29
THIS WAY, PLEASE.

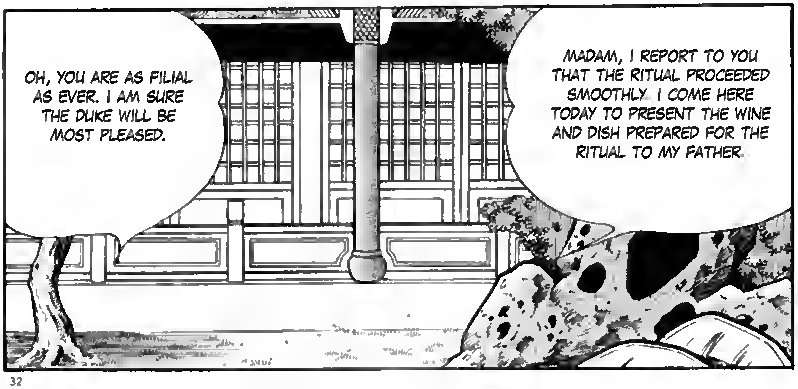
THE NIGHT BEFORE THE DUKE LEFT FOR HIS HUNTING TRIP, THE SPIRIT OF YOUR DECEASED MOTHER APPEARED BEFORE HIM. SHE APPARENTLY LOOKED QUITE LONELY...
YES, OF COURSE
MAY I ASK WHY YOU'VE COME TO VISIT SUDDENLY?
IT WOULD BE BEST IF YOU HELD SACRIFICIAL RITES FOR HER SPIRIT
WHAT!?
EXCELLENT.
YES, OF COURSE. I WILL ARRANGE ONE RIGHT AWAY.


AS HOLDING RITUAL OFFERINGS WERE PART OF THE CROWN PRINCE'S OFFICIAL DUTIES,

31

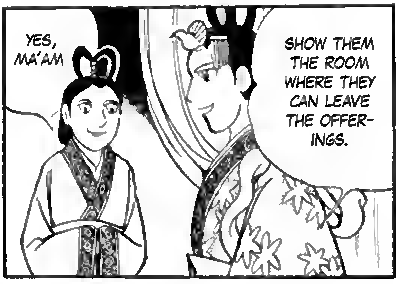

SHENSHENG MADE NO DELAYS IN PREPARING A GRAND OFFERING FOR HIS MOTHER'S SPIRIT


AND IN ACCORDANCE TO CUSTOM, HE SENT SOME OF THE WINE AND MEAT PREPARED FOR THE RITUAL TO THE DUKE.


OH, YOU ARE AS FILIAL AS EVER. I AM SURE THE DUKE WILL BE MOST PLEASED.
MADAM, I REPORT TO YOU THAT THE RITUAL PROCEEDED SMOOTHLY. I COME HERE TODAY TO PRESENT THE WINE AND DISH PREPARED FOR THE RITUAL TO MY FATHER.

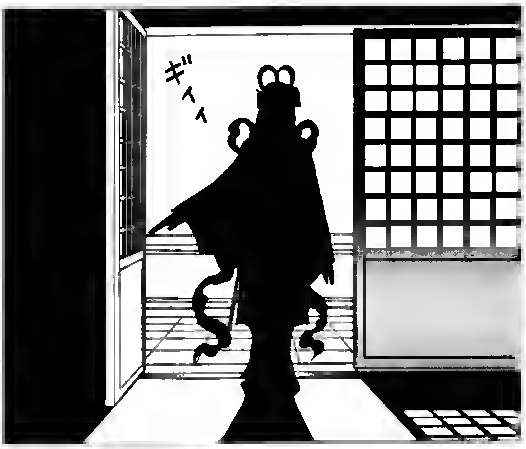
THANK YOU.
UNFORTUNATELY, IT WON'T BE FOR ANOTHER 2 DAYS UNTIL HE RETURNS FROM HIS HUNTING TRIP. I WILL HOLD ON TO THESE OFFERINGS UNTIL THEN.

THIS WAY.

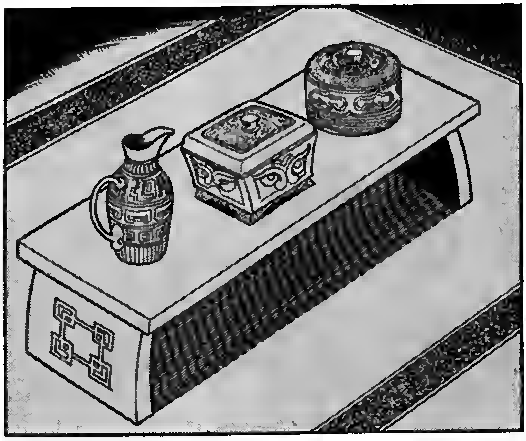

YES, MA'AM
SHOW THEM THE ROOM WHERE THEY CAN LEAVE THE OFFERINGS.

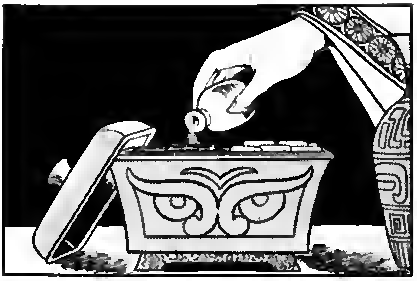
33

YES, TAKE CARE.
PLEASE EXCUSE ME THEN FOR TODAY.



34





35

TWO DAYS LATER, DUKE XIAN RETURNED TO THE PALACE.

WHILE YOU WERE AWAY, PRINCE SHENSHENG HELD A SACRIFICIAL RITE FOR HIS MOTHER'S SPIRIT.

OH? THAT'S WONDERFUL.

YES, QUITE SUCCESSFUL, ACTUALLY. STILL, I MUST ADMIT I'M GETTING OLD AS THE HUNT HAS LEFT MY BODY QUITE TIRED.
WELCOME BACK I HOPE YOUR HUNT WAS SUCCESSFUL.

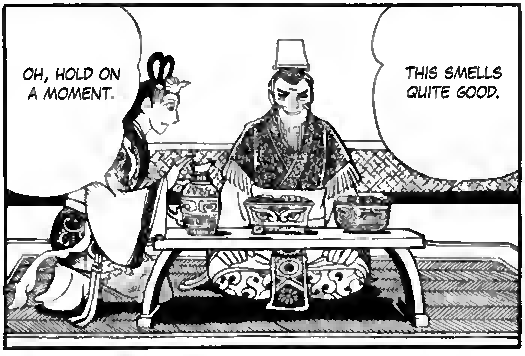
YES, OF COURSE. IT WOULD BE AGAINST TRADITION TO NOT EAT IT NOW.
HE SENT SOME OF THE FOOD AND WINE FROM THE OFFERING THE OTHER DAY. WILL YOU HAVE SOME NOW?

BRING THE FOOD AND WINE, GIRLS.

YES, MA'AM.

37

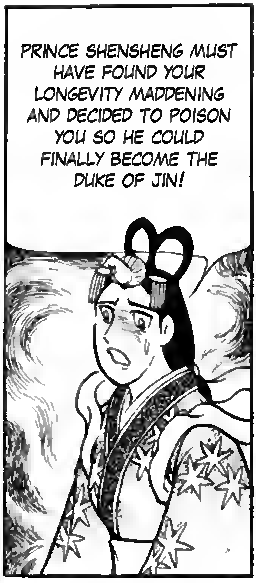
WE CAN'T FORGET TO DO THE CUSTOMARY FOOD TESTING, SINCE THESE DISHES DID COME FROM AFAR


OH, HOLD ON A MOMENT.
THIS SMELLS QUITE GOOD.

YES
HERE.
RIGHT, OF COURSE.
モグ
モグ
ALLOW ME TO SAMPLE THE FOOD THEN.
GAHHH!
UGHH!
AHHH!
WHAT!?

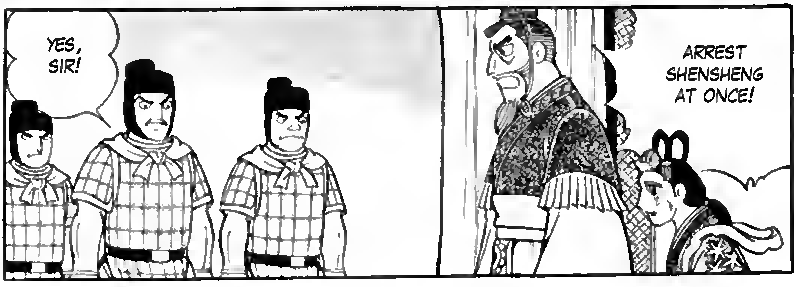
Y-YES, MA'AM...
Y-YOU THERE! TEST THIS WINE AS WELL!
GAH!
39
WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS!?
AGHHH!
URGHH!
THE FOOD AND DRINKS WERE ALL POISONED!

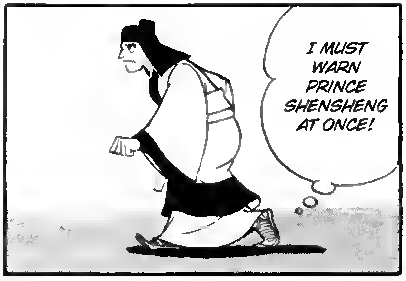
H-HOLD ON, LI JI! CALM DOWN A MOMENT!
HE MUST HAVE FELT INSECURE ABOUT HIS SEAT AS HEIR, GIVEN HOW MUCH LOVE YOU SHOWER ME AND MY SON, XIQI! PLEASE ALLOW XIQI AND ME TO SEEK REFUGE IN ANOTHER DUCHY!

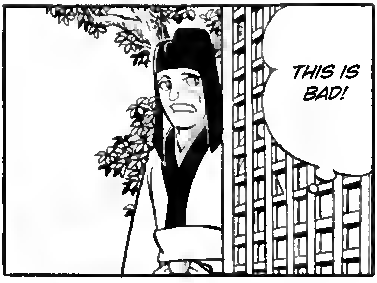

PRINCE SHENSHENG MUST HAVE FOUND YOUR LONGEVITY MADDENING AND DECIDED TO POISON YOU SO HE COULD FINALLY BECOME THE DUKE OF JIN!

HAVE NO FEAR! I WOULD NEVER LET A SON PLOTTING MURDER GET AWAY!
I CANNOT CALM DOWN! I CAN ALREADY FEEL PRINCE SHENSHENG'S MURDEROUS HANDS AT MY NECK AS WELL AS MY SON'S!

40


YES, SIR!
ARREST SHENSHENG AT ONCE!


I MUST WARN PRINCE SHENSHENG AT ONCE!


THIS IS BAD!

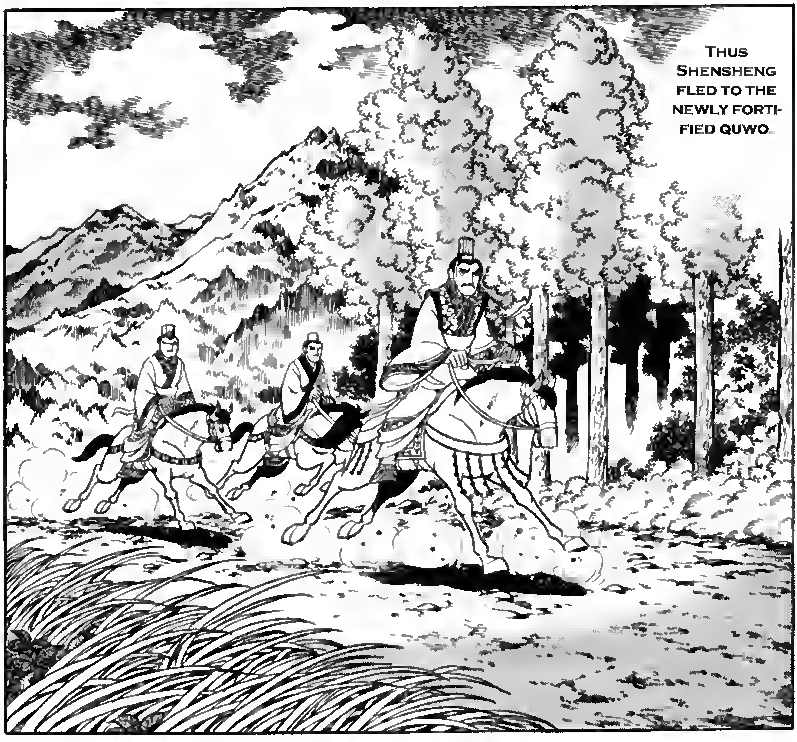
AS SHENSHENG WAS RESPECTED BY MANY PEOPLE, ONE SUCH MAN QUICKLY RUSHED TO WARN HIM OF THE IMPENDING DANGER

41

YES, AND THE ENRAGED DUKE HAS NOW SENT TROOPS TO ARREST YOU!
WHAT!? MY OFFERINGS WERE POISONED!?

R-RIGHT...
SOMEONE HAS CLEARLY FRAMED YOU, SIR! WE MUST TAKE REFUGE BEHIND THE CITY WALLS OF QUWO FOR THE TIME BEING!

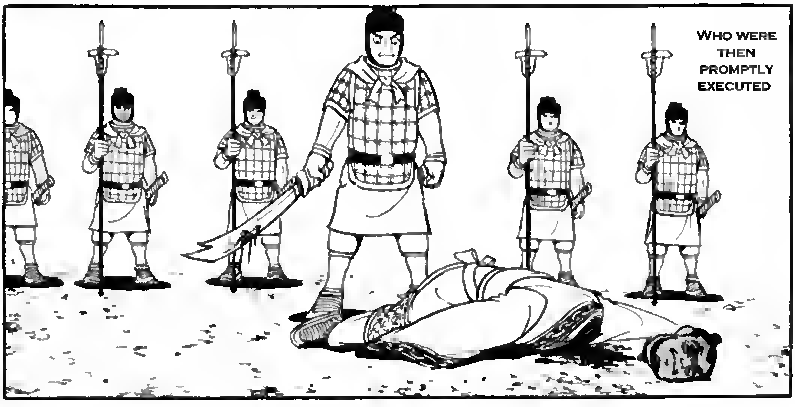
42

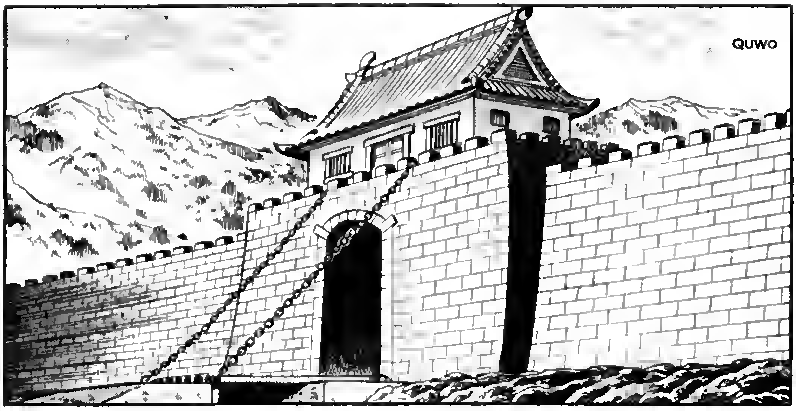

THUS SHENSHENG FLED TO THE NEWLY FORTIFIED QUWO.

SOON AFTER FLEEING, HIS HOME WAS STORMED BY THE DUKE'S TROOPS...

NOT FINDING SHENSHENG, THEY NEVERTHELESS ARRESTED ALL OF HIS FOLLOWERS,

43


WHO WERE THEN PROMPTLY EXECUTED

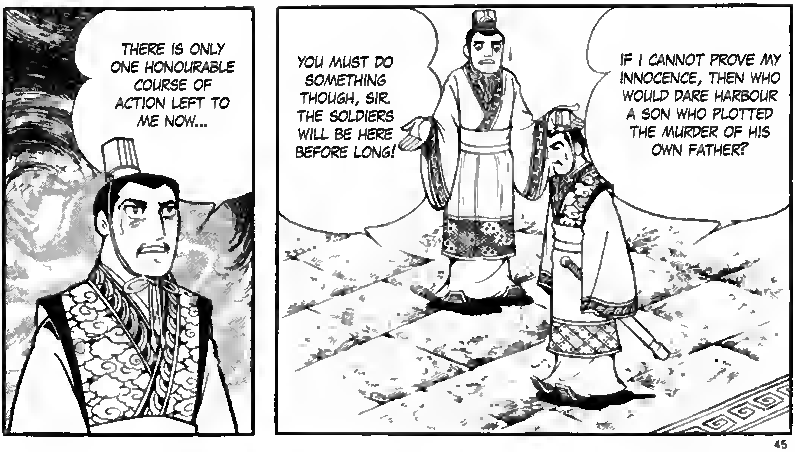

QUWO

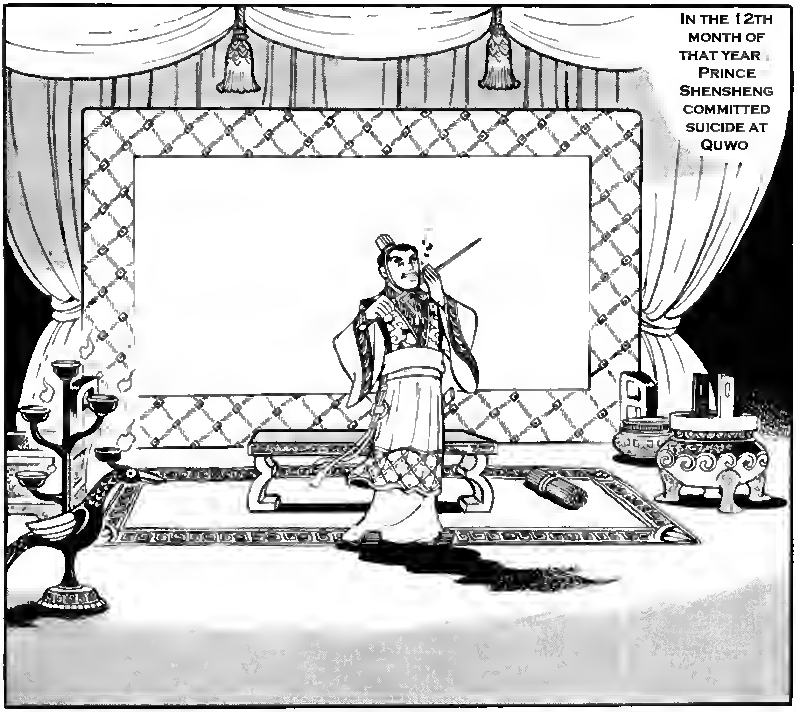
MOREOVER, MY FATHER LOVES LI JI DEEPLY. FROM THE MOMENT HE WAKES UP TO THE MOMENT HE FALLS ASLEEP, HE IS CONSTANTLY ACCOMPANIED BY HER. WERE I TO SOMEHOW PROVE HER GUILT, MY FATHER WILL SURELY BECOME BEDRIDDEN FROM GRIEF AND MAY EVEN DIE SHORTLY AFTER

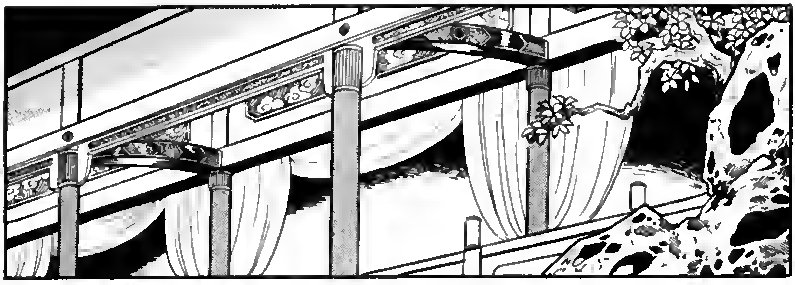
I KNOW, BUT I'M AFRAID THERE'S NO WAY OF DEFINITIVELY PROVING IT.
THIS MUST HAVE BEEN LI JI'S DOING! WHY WILL YOU NOT TELL THE TRUTH TO THE DUKE?

THAT IS NOT VIABLE EITHER.

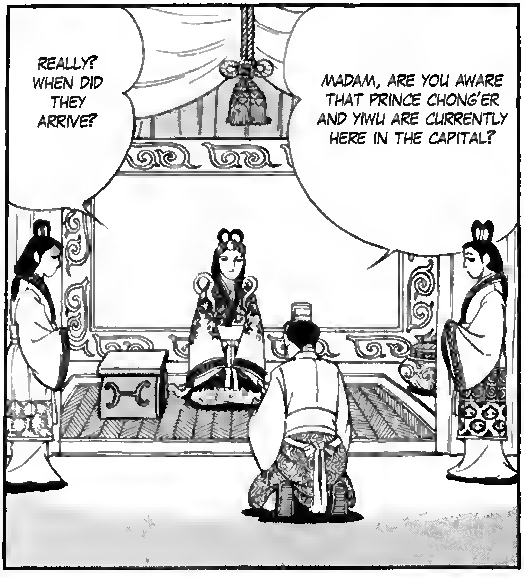
THEN HOW ABOUT SEEKING REFUGE SOMEWHERE FAR AWAY?
HOW COULD I EVER DO THAT AS A SON?


THERE IS ONLY ONE HONOURABLE COURSE OF ACTION LEFT TO ME NOW...
YOU MUST DO SOMETHING THOUGH, SIR. THE SOLDIERS WILL BE HERE BEFORE LONG!
IF I CANNOT PROVE MY INNOCENCE, THEN WHO WOULD DARE HARBOUR A SON WHO PLOTTED THE MURDER OF HIS OWN FATHER?
45


IN THE 12TH MONTH OF THAT YEAR PRINCE SHENSHENG COMMITTED SUICIDE AT QUWO



3 DAYS AGO.


REALLY? WHEN DID THEY ARRIVE?
MADAM, ARE YOU AWARE THAT PRINCE CHONG'ER AND YIWU ARE CURRENTLY HERE IN THE CAPITAL?

MY, I HAD NO IDEA.

46

YES, THEY'RE HERE TO DISCUSS THE DELAYED CONSTRUCTION OF THEIR CITIES' WALLS OR SOME OTHER MATTER.

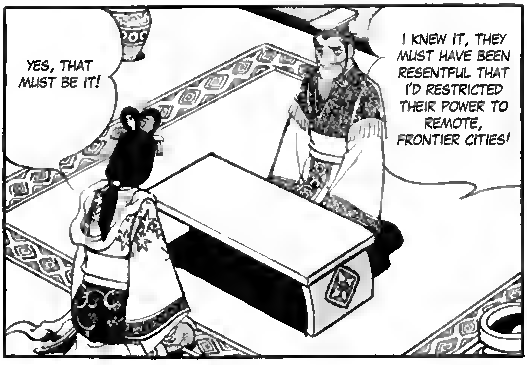
THANK YOU

THANK YOU FOR INFORMING ME. I'LL MAKE SURE YOU'RE REWARDED.

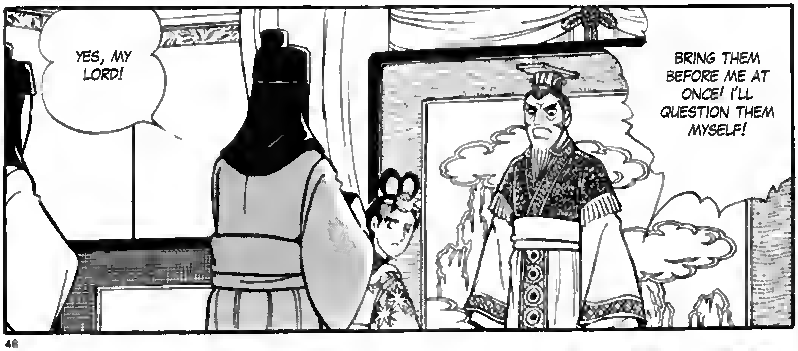
47

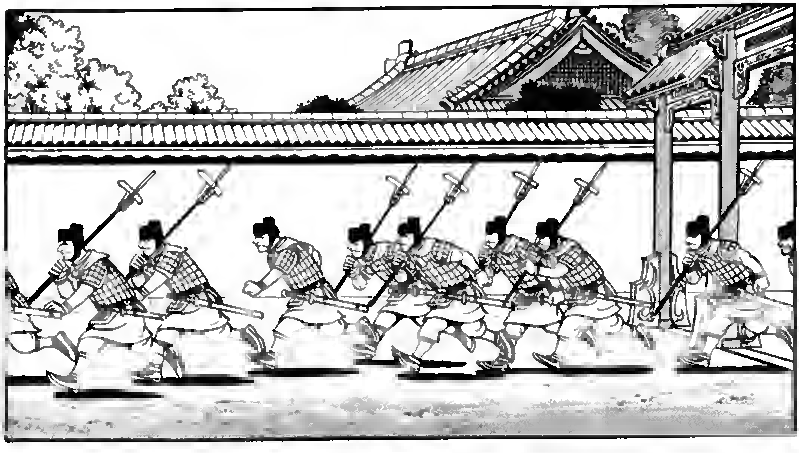
IT HAS JUST COME TO MY ATTENTION THAT CHONG'ER AND YIWU WERE ACCOMPLICES IN SHENSHENG'S PLOT TO POISON YOU.

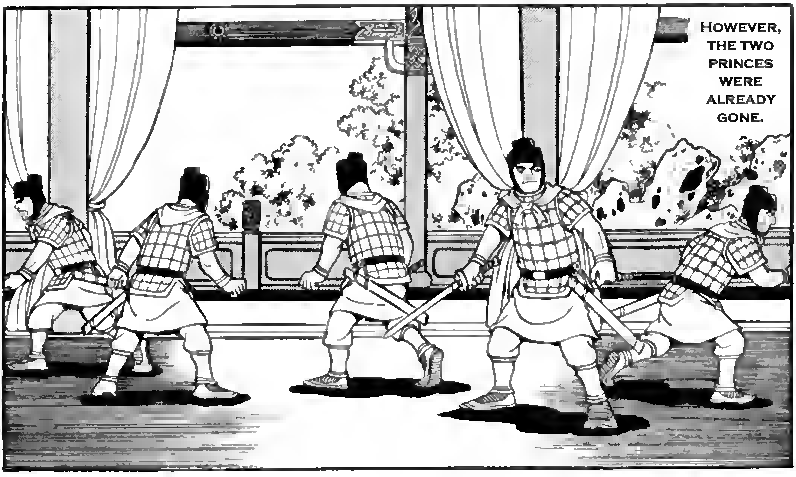
WHAT IS IT? YOU SEEM TROUBLED, LI JI.
MY LORD.

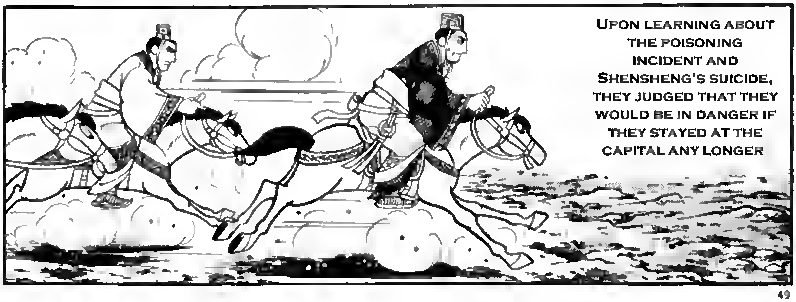

YES, THAT MUST BE IT!
I KNEW IT, THEY MUST HAVE BEEN RESENTFUL THAT I'D RESTRICTED THEIR POWER TO REMOTE, FRONTIER CITIES!

WHAT!?

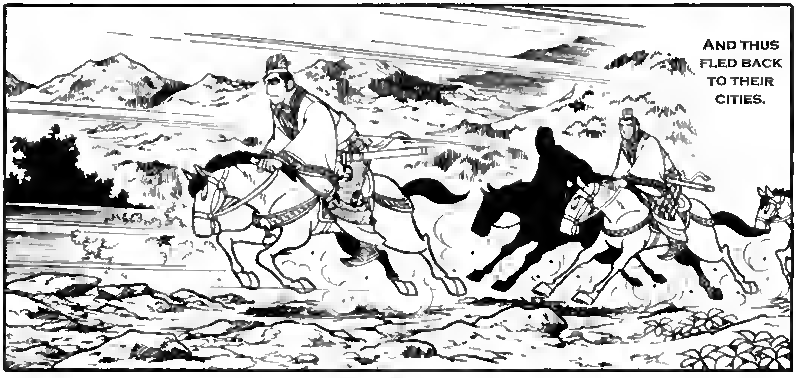

YES, MY LORD!
BRING THEM BEFORE ME AT ONCE! I'LL QUESTION THEM MYSELF!



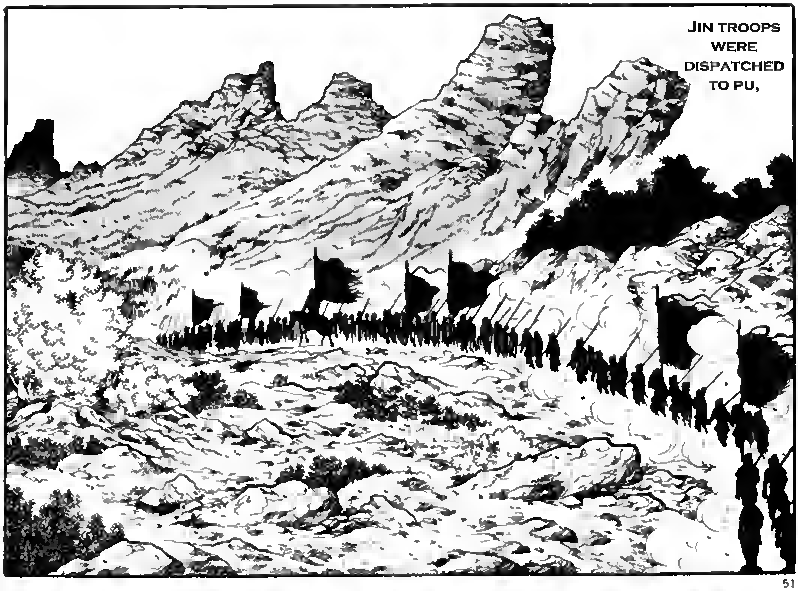

HOWEVER, THE TWO PRINCES WERE ALREADY GONE.


UPON LEARNING ABOUT THE POISONING INCIDENT AND SHENSHENG'S SUICIDE, THEY JUDGED THAT THEY WOULD BE IN DANGER IF THEY STAYED AT THE CAPITAL ANY LONGER

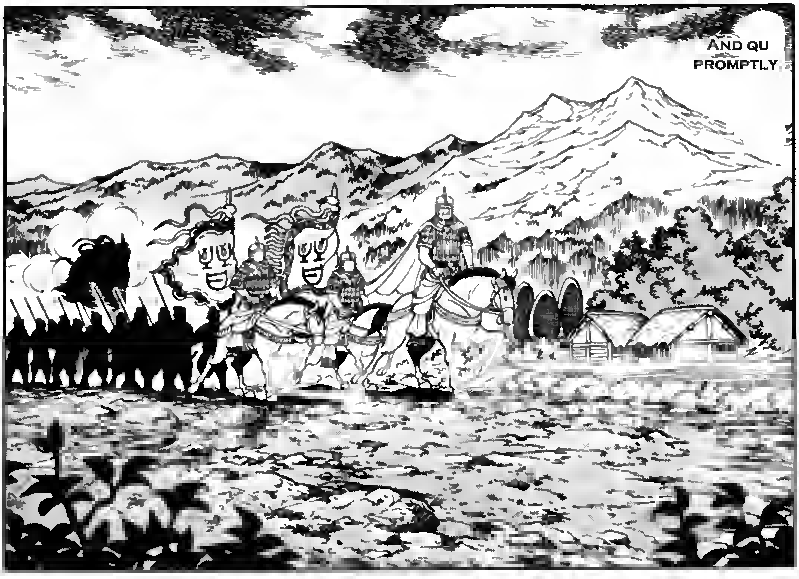
49

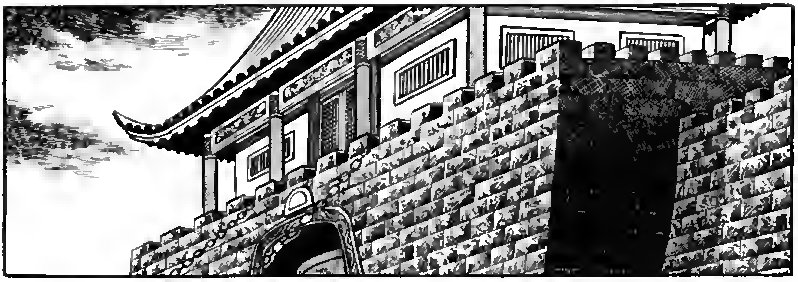

AND THUS FLED BACK TO THEIR CITIES.

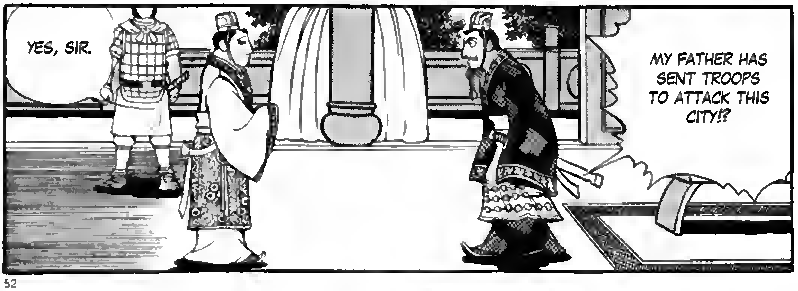
HOW DARE THEY...!
THERE YOU HAVE IT! THE FACT THAT THEY DID NOT BOTHER TO EVEN MEET THEIR OWN FATHER AFTER COMING TO THE CAPITAL PROVES THEIR GUILT!
THEY ALREADY FLED BACK TO THEIR CITIES!?
HAVE NO FEAR. I PROMISE TO PROTECT YOU AND XIQI.
THEIR CONSPIRACY IS ALL SO TERRIFYING...
YES, SIR!
MOBILIZE THE TROOPS AND BRING THEM HERE BY FORCE!



51



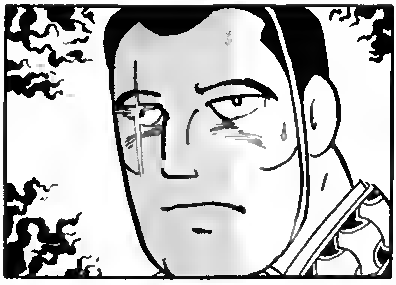


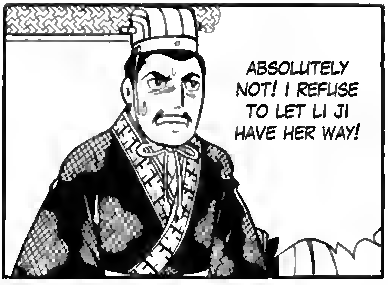

YES, SIR.
MY FATHER HAS SENT TROOPS TO ATTACK THIS CITY!?

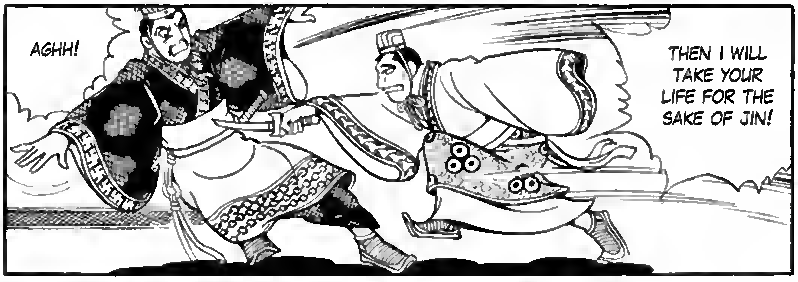
52

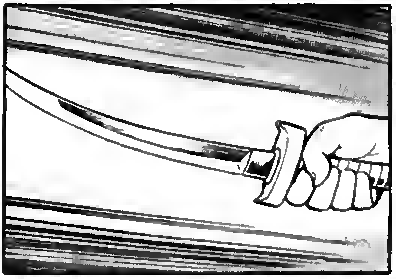
INNOCENT OR NOT, YOUR CURRENT PRESENCE IS LEADING JIN INEVITABLY TO A CIVIL WAR, WHICH WILL BENEFIT JIN'S ENEMIES.

SUICIDE!? BUT I'M INNOCENT!
THIS SMALL CITY CANNOT WITHSTAND AN ASSAULT FOR LONG. I SUGGEST YOU HONOURABLY COMMIT SUICIDE TO RESOLVE THIS INCIDENT.




ABSOLUTELY NOT! I REFUSE TO LET LI JI HAVE HER WAY!


AGHH!
THEN I WILL TAKE YOUR LIFE FOR THE SAKE OF JIN!



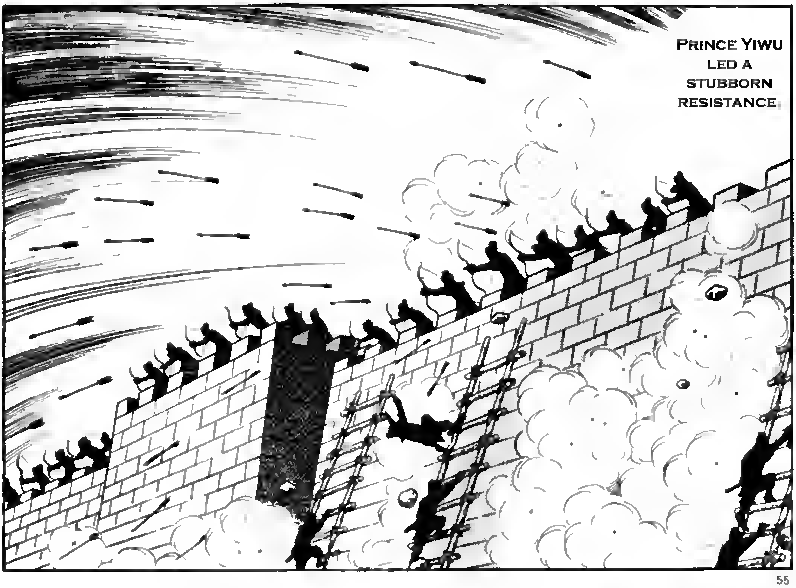
SO YOU WERE LI JI'S AGENT ALL ALONG, WERE YOU NOW, LU DI!

SEEING AS HOW LI JI'S INFLUENCE HAD ALREADY PENETRATED PU, CHONG'ER HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO FLEE.

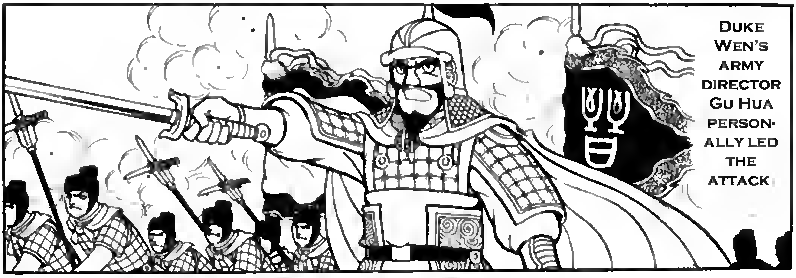
WE HAVE TO RUN! THIS CITY HAS ALREADY TURNED AGAINST US!

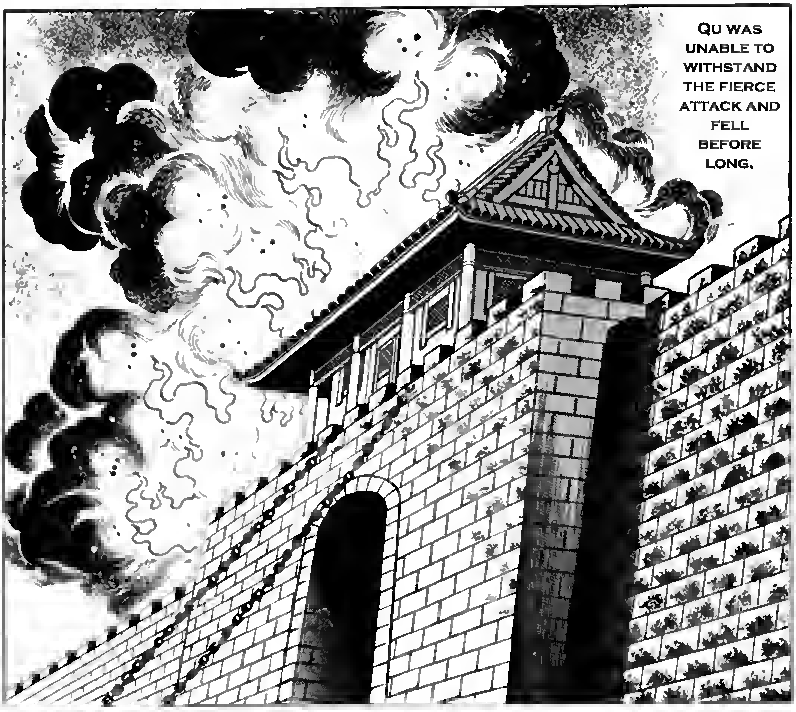
WITH JUST 5 LOYAL AIDES, CHONG'ER FLED TO THE DI TRIBE THAT HIS MOTHER HAD COME FROM.

MEANWHILE AT QU,

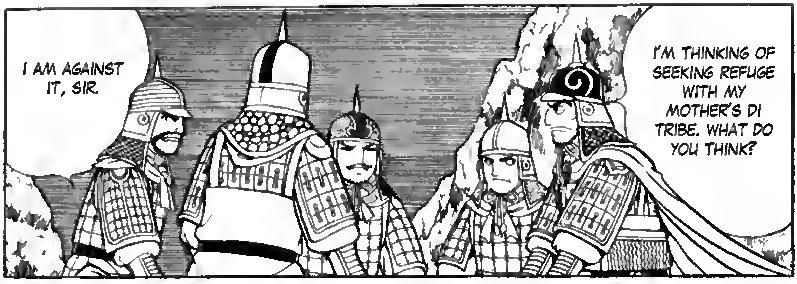

PRINCE YIWU LED A STUBBORN RESISTANCE.

55


DUKE WEN'S ARMY DIRECTOR GU HUA PERSONALLY LED THE ATTACK.


QU WAS UNABLE TO WITHSTAND THE FIERCE ATTACK AND FELL BEFORE LONG,

56


I AM AGAINST IT, SIR.
I'M THINKING OF SEEKING REFUGE WITH MY MOTHER'S DI TRIBE. WHAT DO YOU THINK?

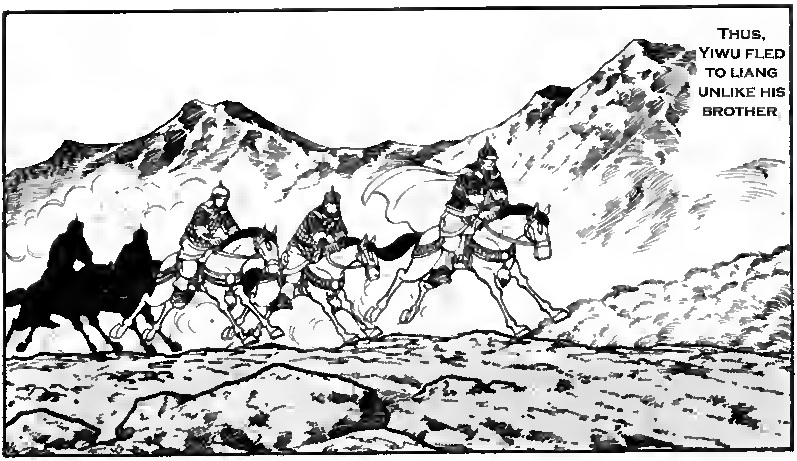
THEN WHAT SHOULD I DO INSTEAD...?
IF YOU WERE TO GO OVER TO THE DI TRIBES AS WELL, YOUR FATHER WILL THEN SEEK A MILITARY CONFRONTATION. IF CONFRONTED BY THE FULL MIGHT OF THE JIN ARMY, THE DI LEADERS WILL BELIEVE IT WOULD BE BETTER TO SIMPLY HAND YOU AND YOUR BROTHER OVER.

WHY IS THAT?

YOUR ELDER BROTHER CHONG'ER HAS ALREADY FLED TO THE DI TRIBES.

57

HMM... YES, I LIKE THAT IDEA.
I SUGGEST FLEEING TO LIANG, SINCE ITS POWERFUL NEIGHBOUR QIN WOULD PREVENT JIN FROM TAKING IT. WE CAN RETURN TO JIN ONCE YOUR FATHER PASSES AWAY.


THUS, YIWU FLED TO LIANG UNLIKE HIS BROTHER

TWO YEARS LATER...

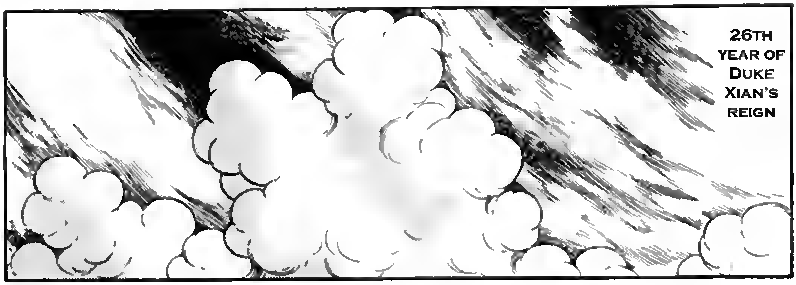
DUKE XIAN SENT HIS ARMIES AGAINST THE DI

The Li tribes decided to protect Chong'er and confront the threat.

At Niesang, the two armies clashed...

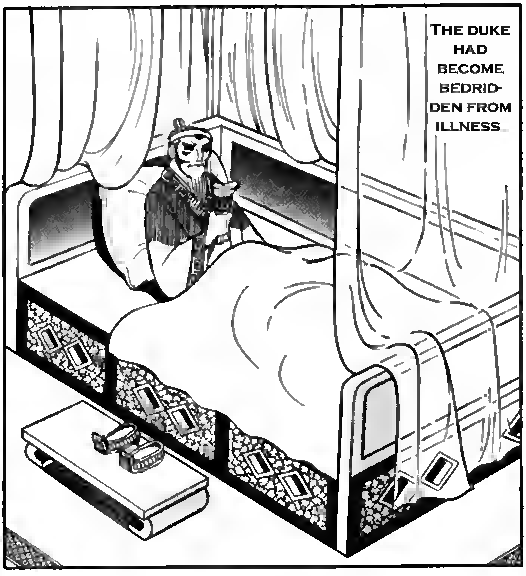
59

And the Jin army was defeated


26TH YEAR OF DUKE XIAN'S REIGN

XUN XI.

YES?

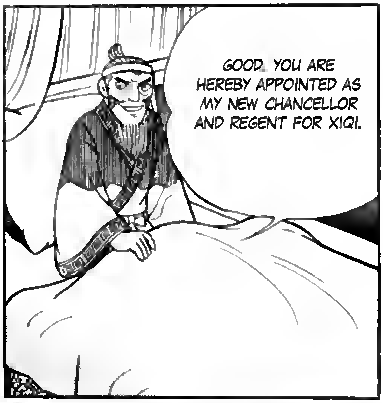

THE DUKE HAD BECOME BEDRIDDEN FROM ILLNESS.

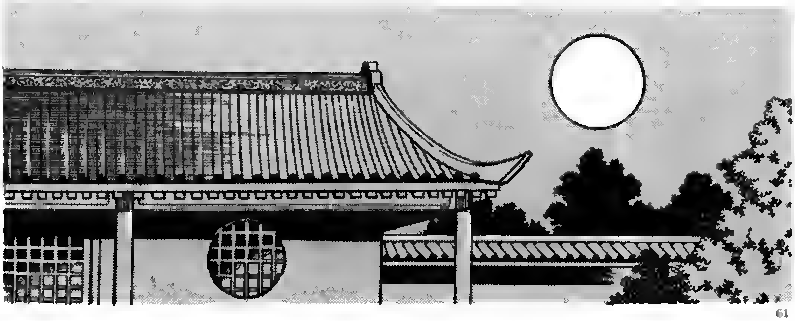
60

XUN XI GAVE THE DUKE THE STRONG REPLY HE'D BEEN ANXIOUS FOR
OF COURSE, MY LORD. YOU CAN COUNT ON ME.

WHEN I PASS, I WISH FOR XIQI TO SUCCEED ME. HOWEVER, AS HE IS STILL VERY YOUNG, I FEAR MY OTHER RETAINERS WILL REFUSE TO OBEY HIM. WILL YOU LEND HIM YOUR SUPPORT...?

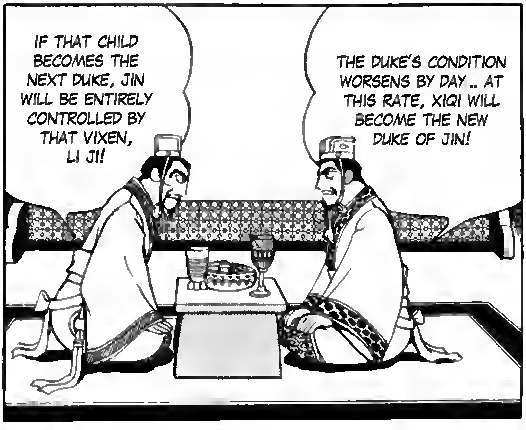
I AM HONOURED.

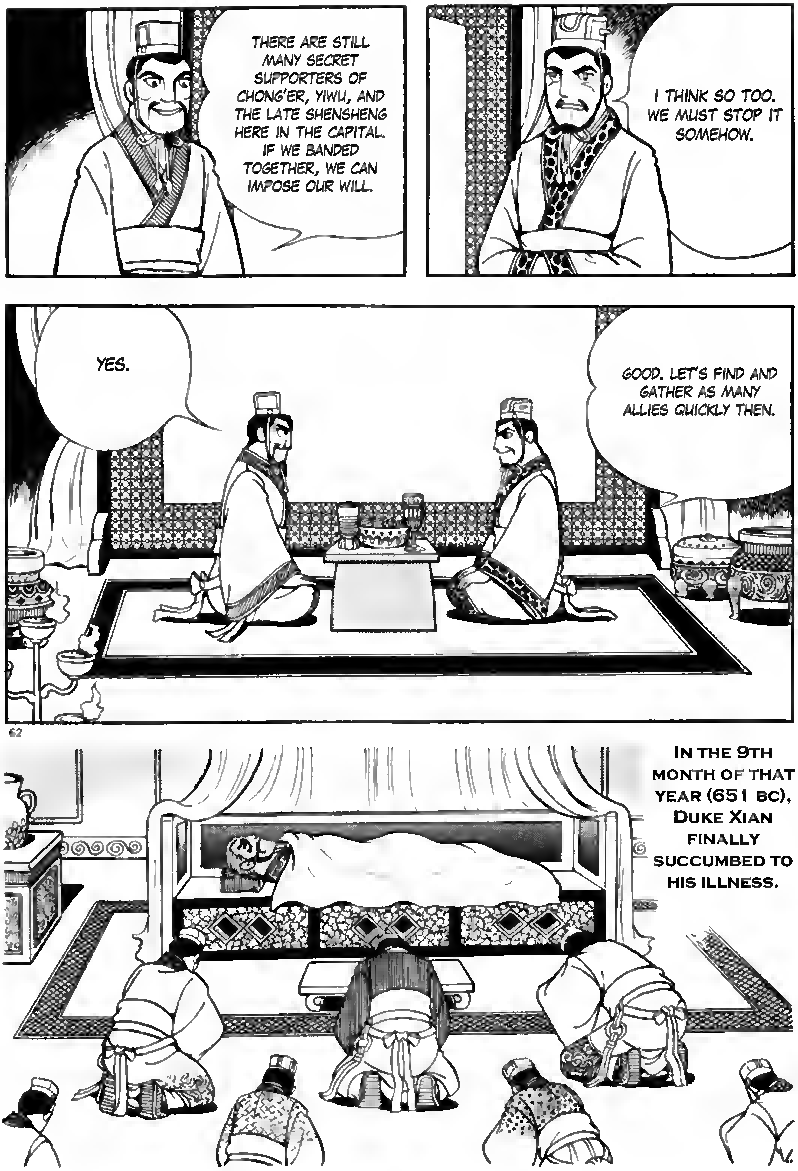

GOOD. YOU ARE HEREBY APPOINTED AS MY NEW CHANCELLOR AND REGENT FOR XIQI.

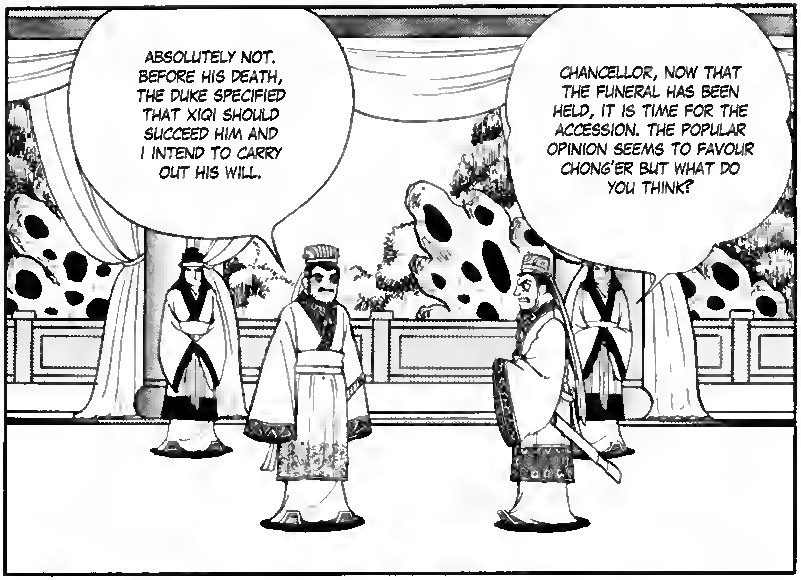


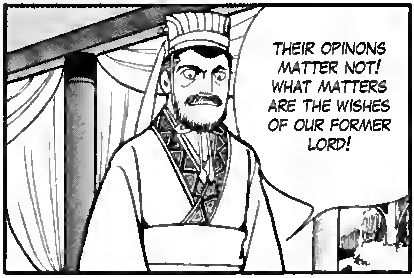
61

I CANNOT ALLOW IT! CHONG'ER SHOULD BE THE NEXT DUKE OF JIN, NOT XIQI!


IF THAT CHILD BECOMES THE NEXT DUKE, JIN WILL BE ENTIRELY CONTROLLED BY THAT VIXEN, LI JI!
THE DUKE'S CONDITION WORSENS BY DAY.. AT THIS RATE, XIQI WILL BECOME THE NEW DUKE OF JIN!


THERE ARE STILL MANY SECRET SUPPORTERS OF CHONG'ER, YIWU, AND THE LATE SHENSHENG HERE IN THE CAPITAL. IF WE BANDED TOGETHER, WE CAN IMPOSE OUR WILL.
I THINK SO TOO. WE MUST STOP IT SOMEHOW.
YES.
GOOD. LET'S FIND AND GATHER AS MANY ALLIES QUICKLY THEN.
62
IN THE 9TH MONTH OF THAT YEAR (651 BC), DUKE XIAN FINALLY SUCCUMBED TO HIS ILLNESS.


ABSOLUTELY NOT. BEFORE HIS DEATH, THE DUKE SPECIFIED THAT XIQI SHOULD SUCCEED HIM AND I INTEND TO CARRY OUT HIS WILL.
CHANCELLOR, NOW THAT THE FUNERAL HAS BEEN HELD, IT IS TIME FOR THE ACCESSION. THE POPULAR OPINION SEEMS TO FAVOUR CHONG'ER BUT WHAT DO YOU THINK?


THEIR OPINONS MATTER NOT! WHAT MATTERS ARE THE WISHES OF OUR FORMER LORD!

BUT ALL THE OTHER OFFICIALS-

63

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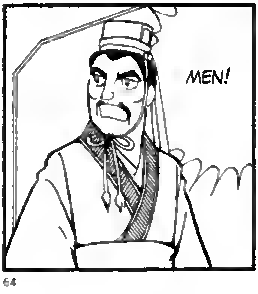
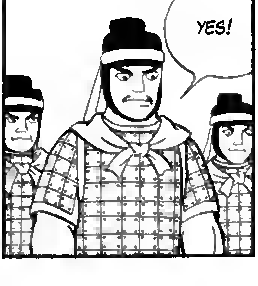
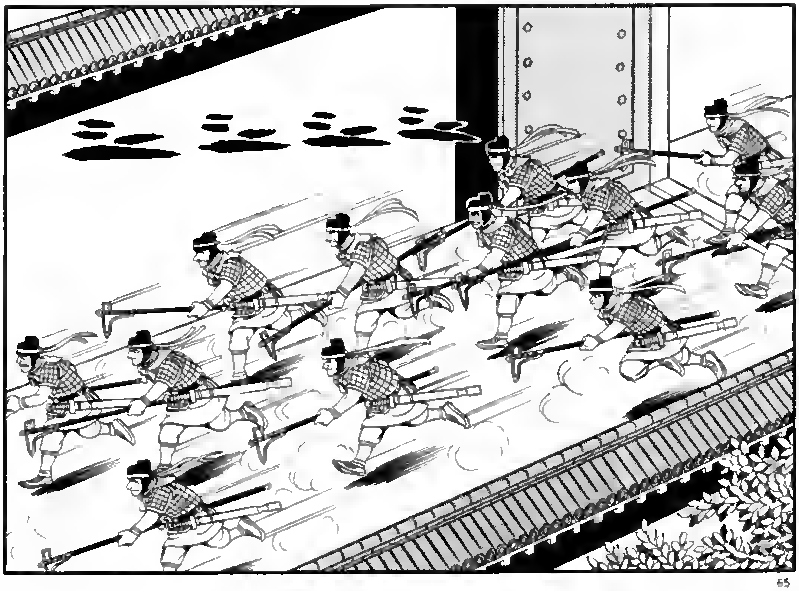

MEN!

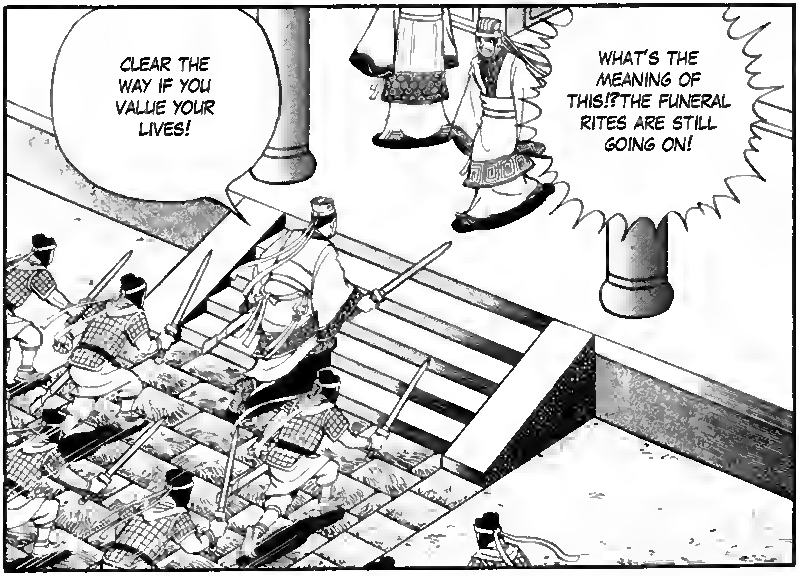
64

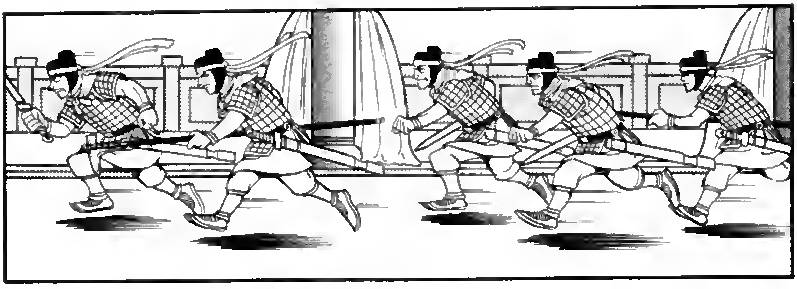
HE STILL REFUSES TO CHANGE HIS MIND. WE HAVE NO CHOICE. NOW'S THE TIME TO ACT!
WHAT DID CHANCELLOR XUN XI SAY?


YES!

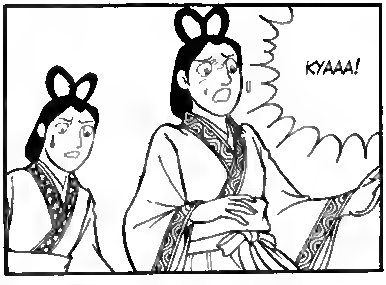


65

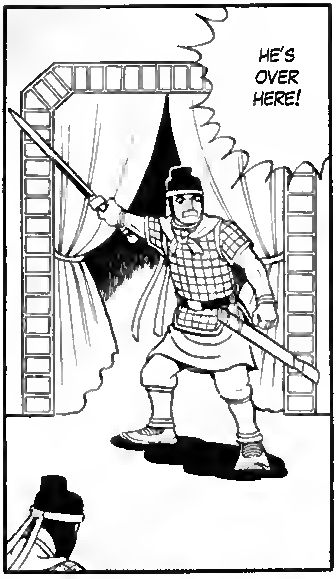

CLEAR THE WAY IF YOU VALUE YOUR LIVES!
WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS!? THE FUNERAL RITES ARE STILL GOING ON!



HOW DARE YOU INTRUDE HERE BEARING ARMS!

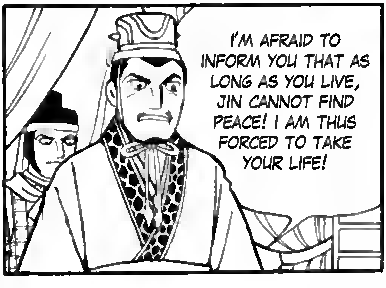

KYAAA!

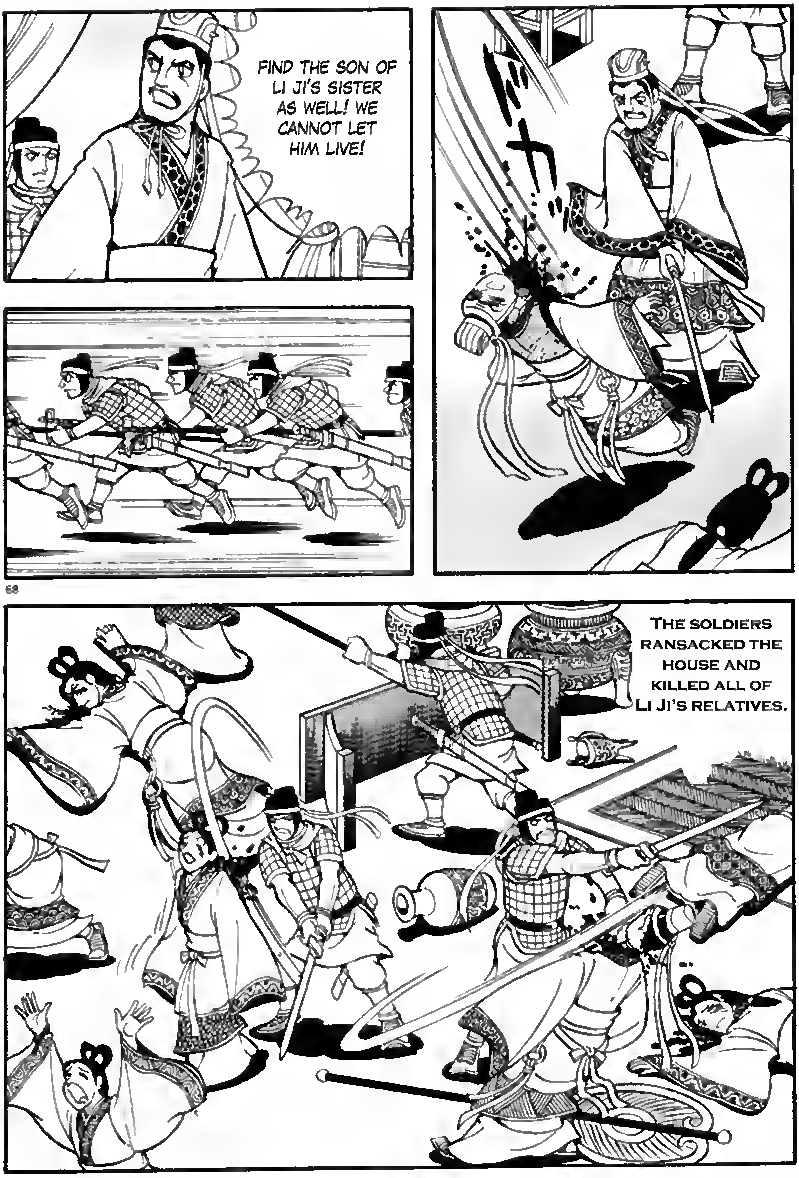
AGHHH!
SILENCE! I WILL NOT LET YOU LEAD JIN TO RUIN!


HE'S OVER HERE!

FIND XIQI!

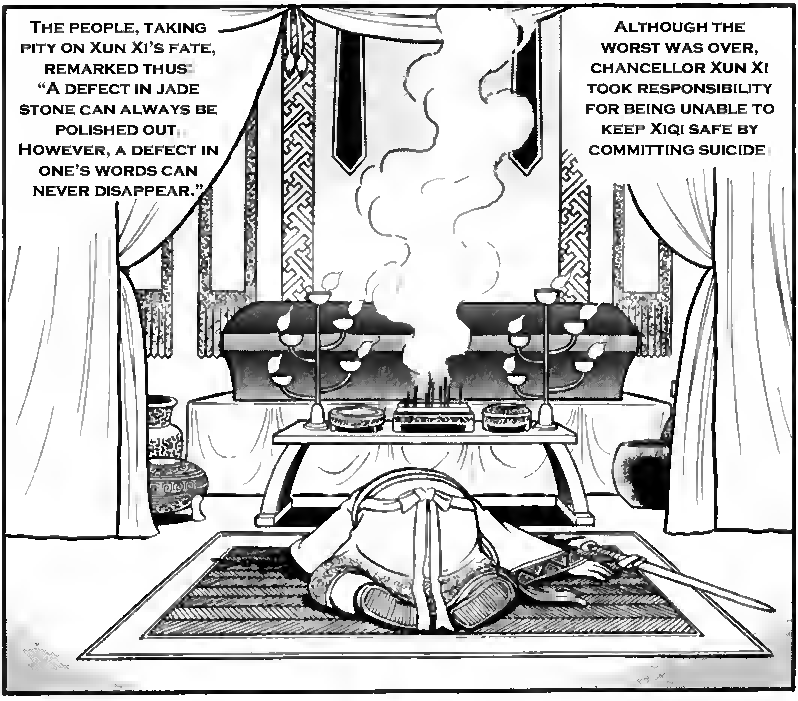
67

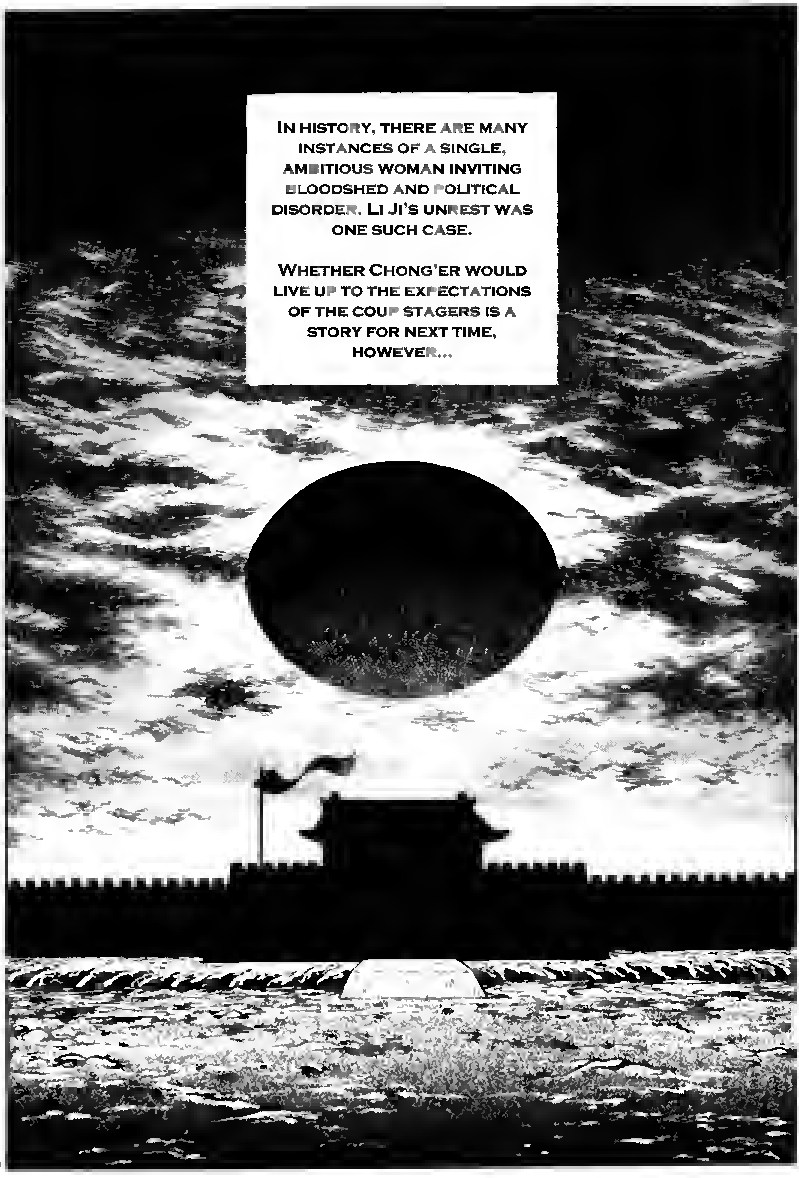

I'M AFRAID TO INFORM YOU THAT AS LONG AS YOU LIVE, JIN CANNOT FIND PEACE! I AM THUS FORCED TO TAKE YOUR LIFE!


FIND THE SON OF LI JI'S SISTER AS WELL! WE CANNOT LET HIM LIVE!
68
THE SOLDIERS RANSACKED THE HOUSE AND KILLED ALL OF LI JI'S RELATIVES.

WITH THEIR DEATHS, THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF THE STATE HAS BEEN SETTLED. THE ONLY THING LEFT IS TO WELCOME CHONG'ER.

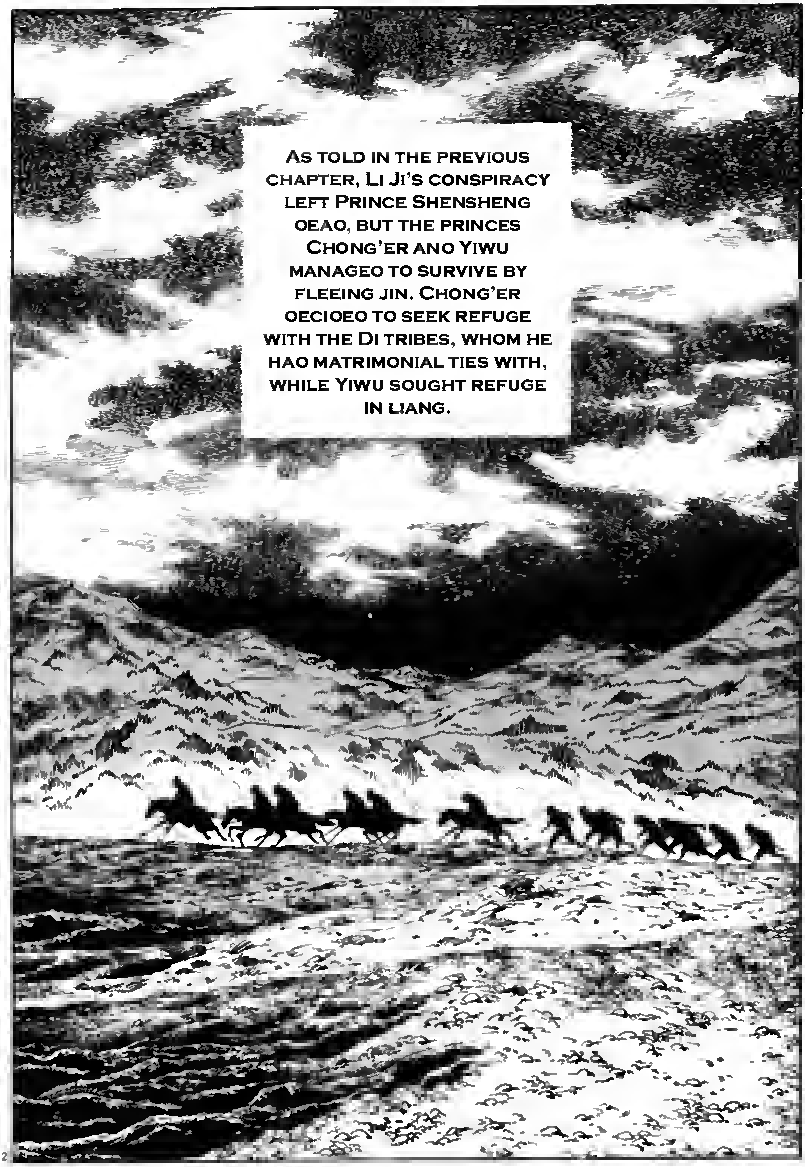
69


THE PEOPLE, TAKING PITY ON XUN XI'S FATE, REMARKED THUS: "A DEFECT IN JADE STONE CAN ALWAYS BE POLISHED OUT. HOWEVER, A DEFECT IN ONE'S WORDS CAN NEVER DISAPPEAR."
ALTHOUGH THE WORST WAS OVER, CHANCELLOR XUN XI TOOK RESPONSIBILITY FOR BEING UNABLE TO KEEP XIQI SAFE BY COMMITTING SUICIDE.


In history, there are many instances of a single, ambitious woman inviting bloodshed and political disorder. Li Ji's unrest was one such case.
Whether Chong'er would live up to the expectations of the coup stagers is a story for next time, however...

Chapter 4

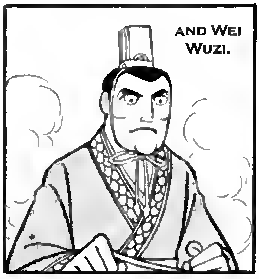
Wandering Hegemon, Duke Wen


As told in the previous chapter, Li Ji's conspiracy left Prince Shensheng dead, but the princes Chong'er and Yiwu managed to survive by fleeing Jin. Chong'er decided to seek refuge with the Di tribes, whom he had matrimonial ties with, while Yiwu sought refuge in Liang.

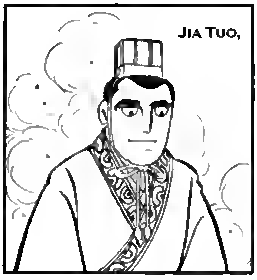
When Chong'er fled, he was accompanied by 5 retainers and a handful of lowly attendants

Hu Yan,

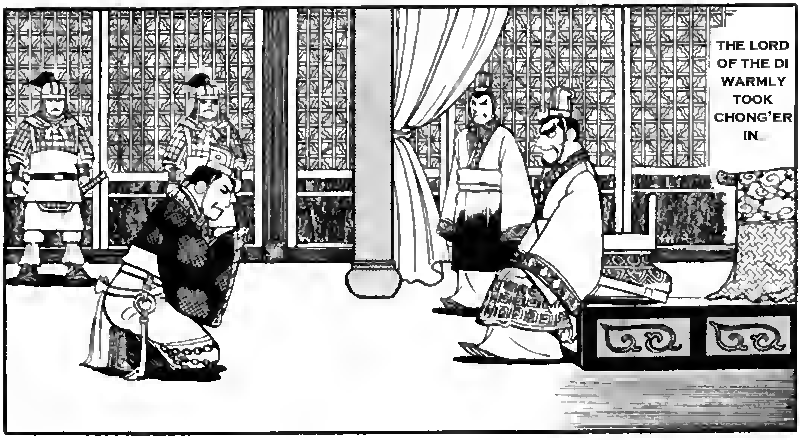
Zhao Cui,


and Wei Wuzi.

Xian Zhen,

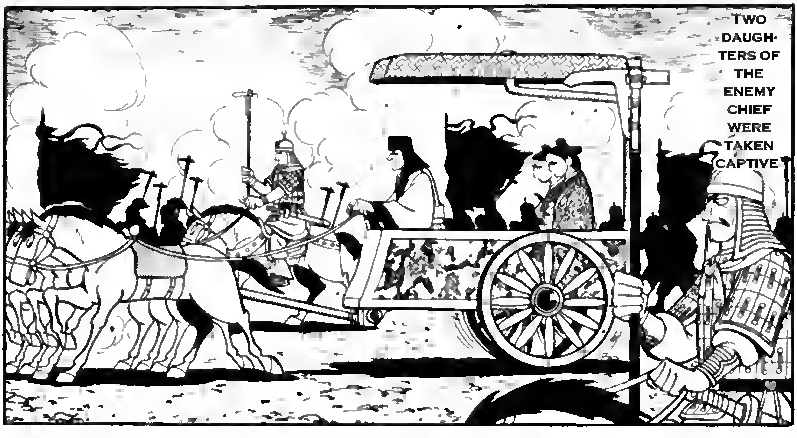

Jia Tuo,

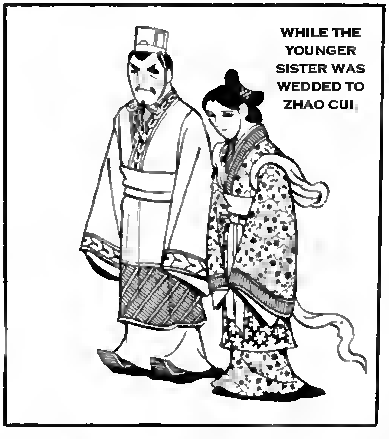
3

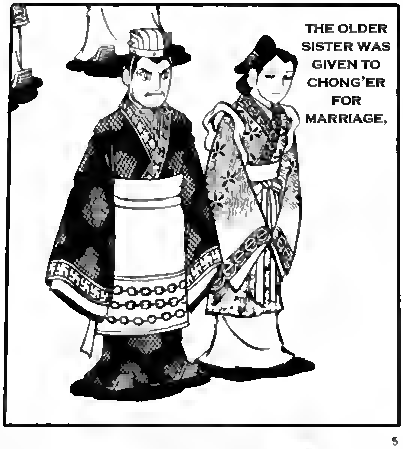

THE LORD OF THE DI WARMLY TOOK CHONG'ER IN...

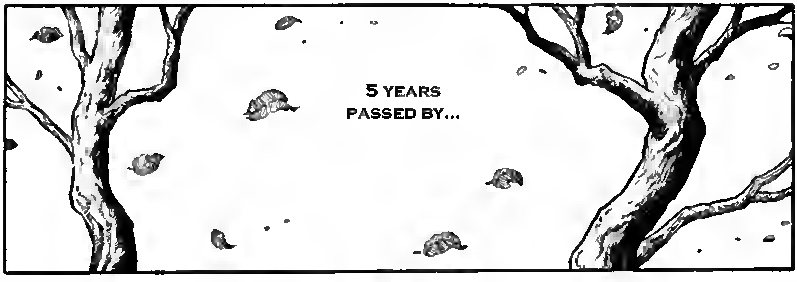
4

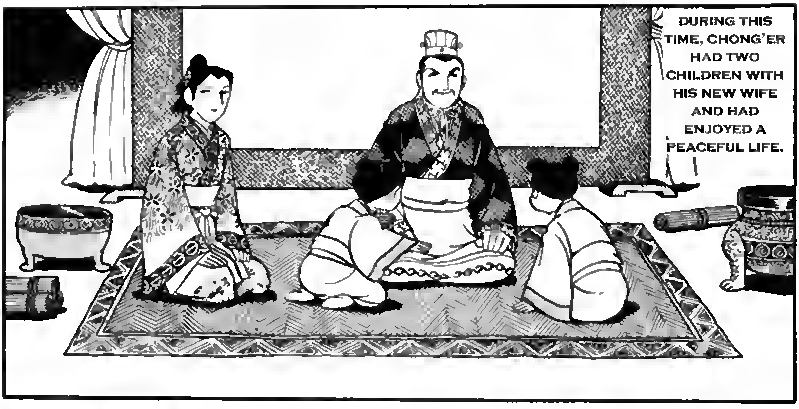
SHORTLY AFTER, WHEN THE DI ATTACKED THE QIANGGAORU TRIBE...


TWO DAUGHTERS OF THE ENEMY CHIEF WERE TAKEN CAPTIVE

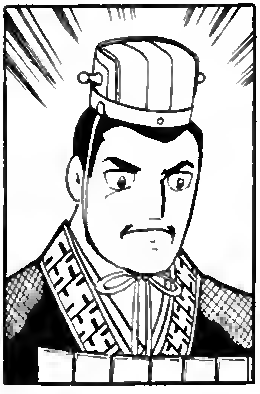

WHILE THE YOUNGER SISTER WAS WEDDED TO ZHAO CUI


THE OLDER SISTER WAS GIVEN TO CHONG'ER FOR MARRIAGE,


5 YEARS PASSED BY...


DURING THIS TIME, CHONG'ER HAD TWO CHILDREN WITH HIS NEW WIFE AND HAD ENJOYED A PEACEFUL LIFE.

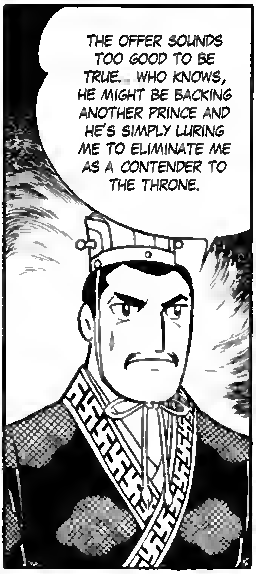
WHAT COULD THIS BE ABOUT...?



LI KE FROM JIN?
MY LORD, MINISTER LI KE HAS SENT YOU A MESSAGE FROM JIN.

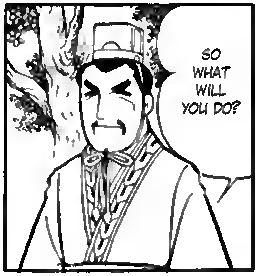
THAT'S NOT ALL. LI KE HAS DEFIED MY FATHER'S WILL BY MURDERING LI JI, HER SON, AND HER ENTIRE FACTION

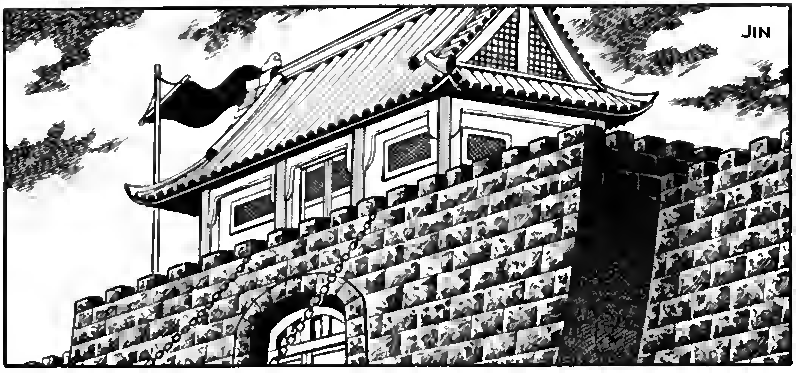
HE HAS!?
MY FATHER HAS PASSED AWAY...


THE OFFER SOUNDS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE... WHO KNOWS, HE MIGHT BE BACKING ANOTHER PRINCE AND HE'S SIMPLY LURING ME TO ELIMINATE ME AS A CONTENDER TO THE THRONE.

WHAT!?
HE NOW ASKS ME TO RETURN TO JIN AND TAKE MY RIGHTFUL PLACE AS THE NEW DUKE.

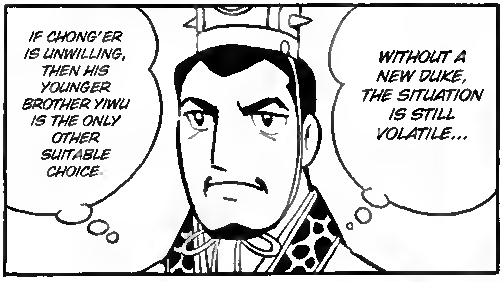
CONSIDERING PURGES AND ASSASSINATIONS WERE NOT UNCOMMON IN THIS ERA, CHONG'ER'S HESITANCE WAS UNDERSTANDABLE
IT'S TOO RISKY... I'LL REJECT HIS INVITATION!

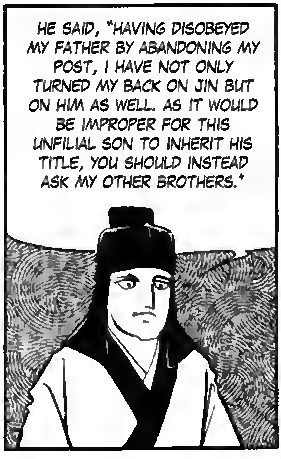

SO WHAT WILL YOU DO?


JIN

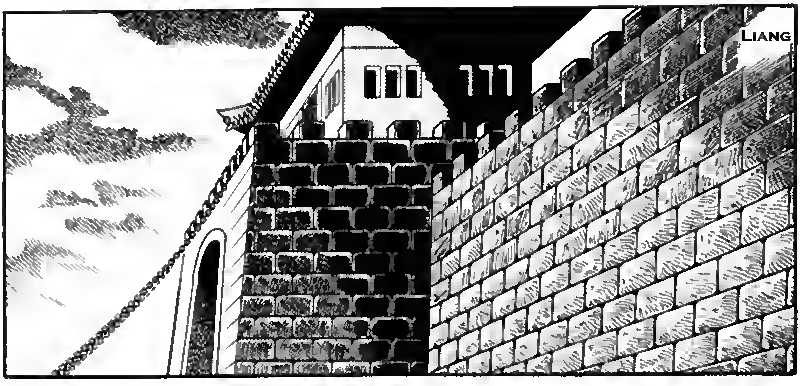
I'M AFRAID SO.
WHAT!? PRINCE CHONG'ER REFUSED TO COME BACK!?

3


IF CHONG'ER IS UNWILLING, THEN HIS YOUNGER BROTHER YIWU IS THE ONLY OTHER SUITABLE CHOICE.
WITHOUT A NEW DUKE, THE SITUATION IS STILL VOLATILE...


HE SAID, "HAVING DISOBEYED MY FATHER BY ABANDONING MY POST, I HAVE NOT ONLY TURNED MY BACK ON JIN BUT ON HIM AS WELL. AS IT WOULD BE IMPROPER FOR THIS UNFILIAL SON TO INHERIT HIS TITLE, YOU SHOULD INSTEAD ASK MY OTHER BROTHERS."

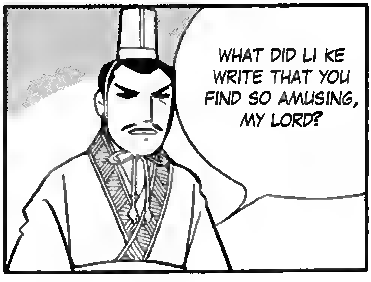
YES, SIR!
I WANT YOU TO QUICKLY GO TO LIANG AND DELIVER THIS NEXT MESSAGE TO PRINCE YIWU.
YES, SIR.
MAKE SURE THIS GETS TO HIS HANDS SAFELY.
THUS, ANOTHER MESSAGE WAS SENT OFF TO LIANG IN A HURRY.

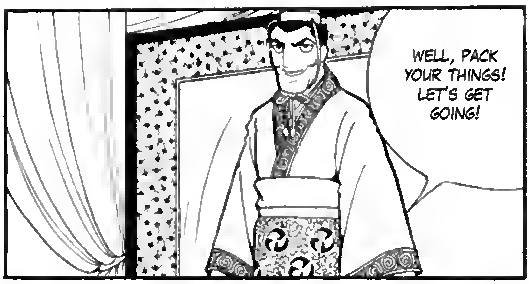

LIANG

?
HAHAHA!

10

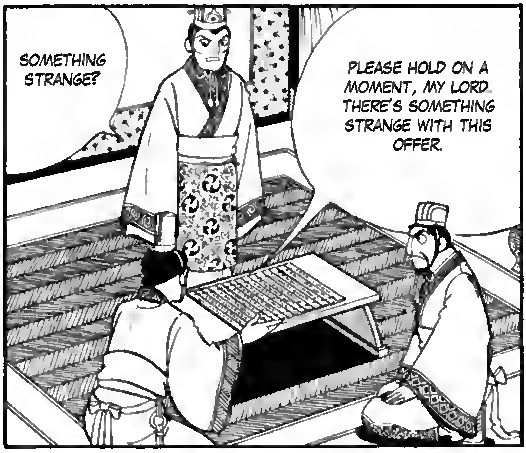
HAHA, DON'T BE STARTLED NOW, BUT HE ASKS THAT I RETURN TO JIN AT ONCE TO BECOME THE NEW DUKE!


WHAT DID LI KE WRITE THAT YOU FIND SO AMUSING, MY LORD?

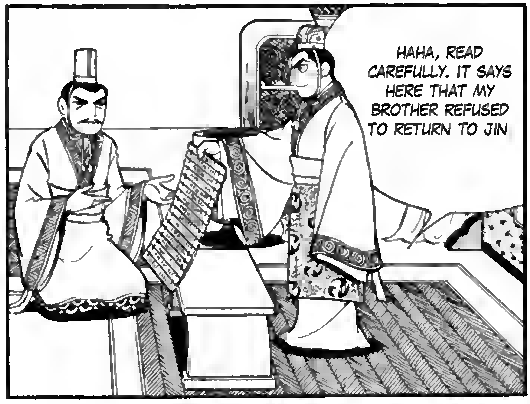

WELL, PACK YOUR THINGS! LET'S GET GOING!

WHAT!?

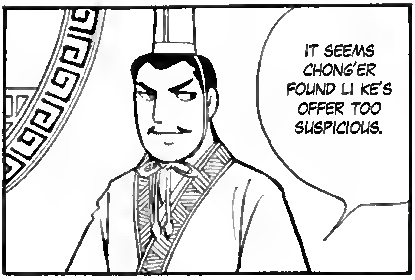
EVEN IF PRINCE XIQI HAS BEEN KILLED, THERE ARE STILL OTHER PRINCES IN JIN. WHY WOULD HE THEN BOTHER ASKING AN EXILED PRINCE TO BECOME THE NEXT DUKE?


SOMETHING STRANGE?
PLEASE HOLD ON A MOMENT, MY LORD. THERE'S SOMETHING STRANGE WITH THIS OFFER.

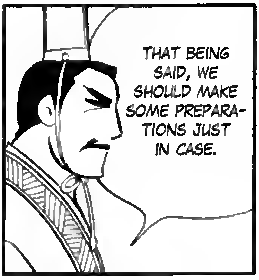
11


HAHA, READ CAREFULLY. IT SAYS HERE THAT MY BROTHER REFUSED TO RETURN TO JIN

YES, AND SPEAKING OF EXILES, IT SEEMS ODD THAT THEY WOULD SKIP OVER YOUR ELDER BROTHER, PRINCE CHONG'ER.


IT SEEMS CHONG'ER FOUND LI KE'S OFFER TOO SUSPICIOUS.

AH, I SEE... SO HE TOLD LI KE TO CHOOSE ONE OF HIS OTHER BROTHERS TO BECOME THE NEXT DUKE...

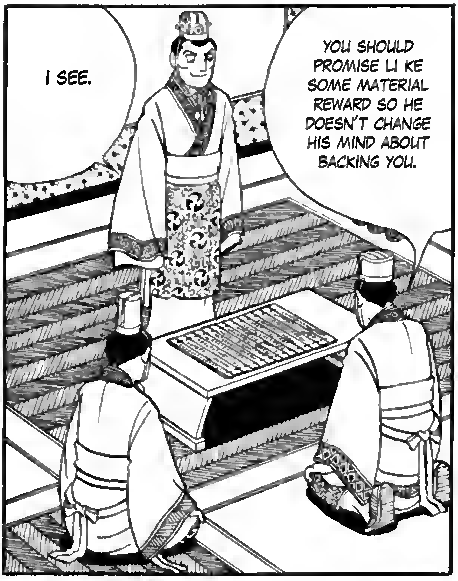

THAT BEING SAID, WE SHOULD MAKE SOME PREPARATIONS JUST IN CASE.

WHAT KIND OF PREPARATIONS?

NO, IN FACT I BELIEVE THIS IS THE CHANCE OF A LIFETIME FOR MY LORD.
ARE YOU PERHAPS IMPLYING I SHOULD FOLLOW MY BROTHER'S ACTIONS...?

12

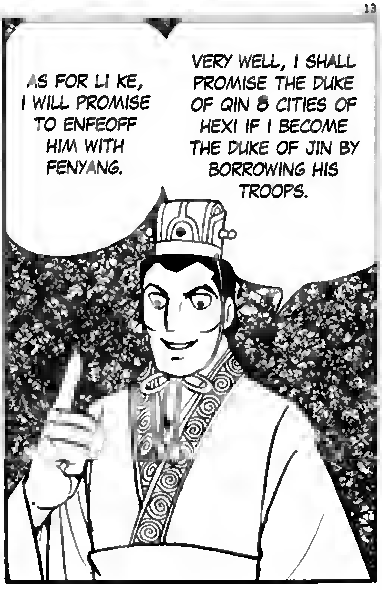
AH, GOOD IDEA!
THE POWERFUL DUKE MU OF QIN IS WEDDED TO YOUR SISTER. YOU SHOULD THUS USE YOUR FAMILY TIES TO BORROW SOME TROOPS TO RETURN TO JIN WITH. THAT WAY, EVEN IF THERE WERE SOME CONSPIRACY IN JIN WAITING FOR YOU, YOU WOULD ESCAPE MORTAL PERIL.

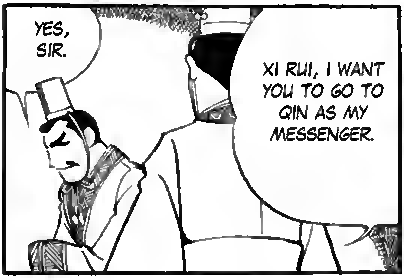

I SEE.
YOU SHOULD PROMISE LI KE SOME MATERIAL REWARD SO HE DOESN'T CHANGE HIS MIND ABOUT BACKING YOU.

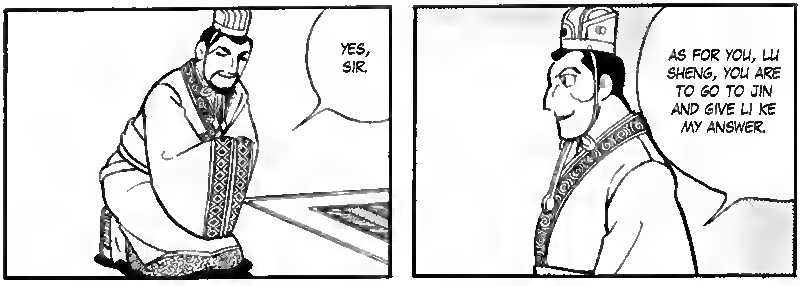
LET ME SUGGEST ONE OTHER THING TOO.

?

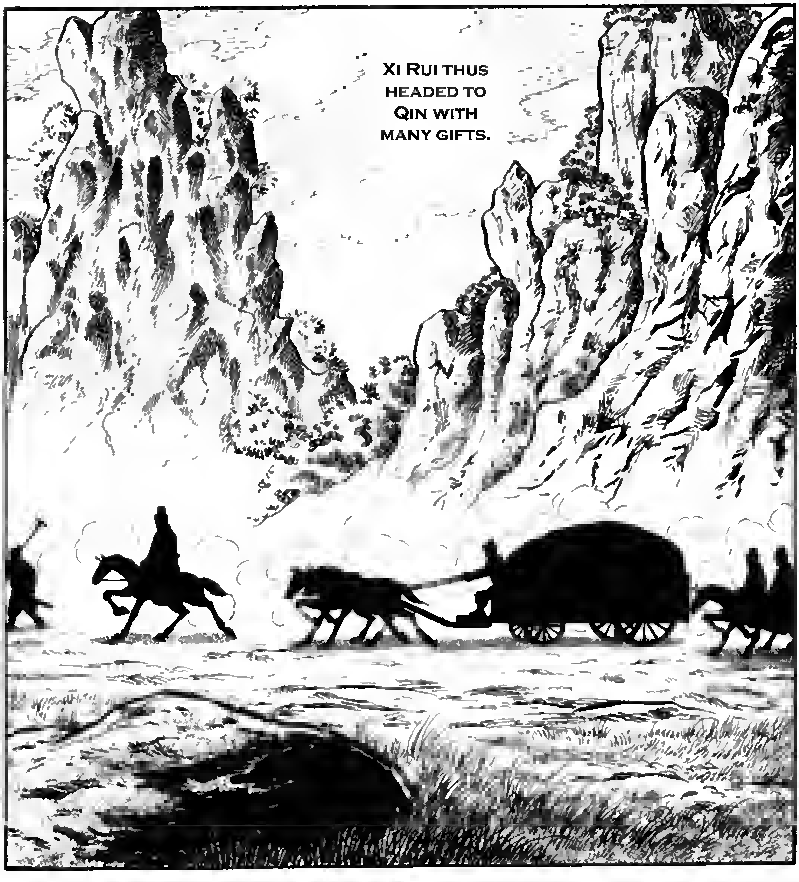
YES, THAT SHOULD DO.

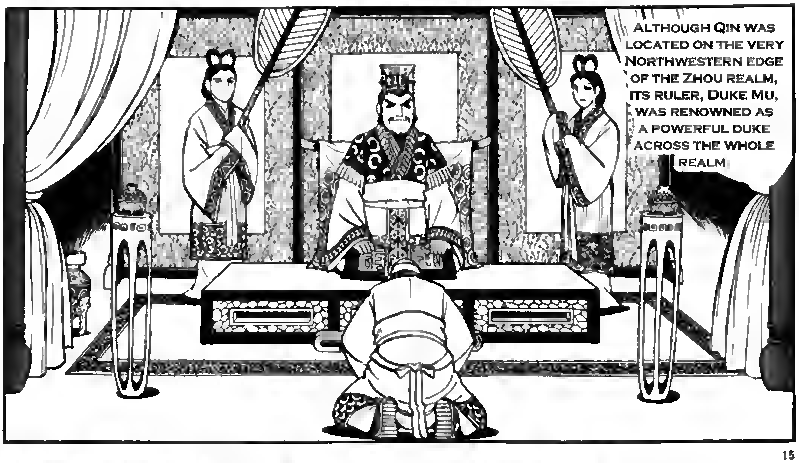

AS FOR LI KE, I WILL PROMISE TO ENFEOFF HIM WITH FENYANG.
VERY WELL, I SHALL PROMISE THE DUKE OF QIN 5 CITIES OF HEXI IF I BECOME THE DUKE OF JIN BY BORROWING HIS TROOPS.


YES, SIR.
XI RUI, I WANT YOU TO GO TO QIN AS MY MESSENGER.

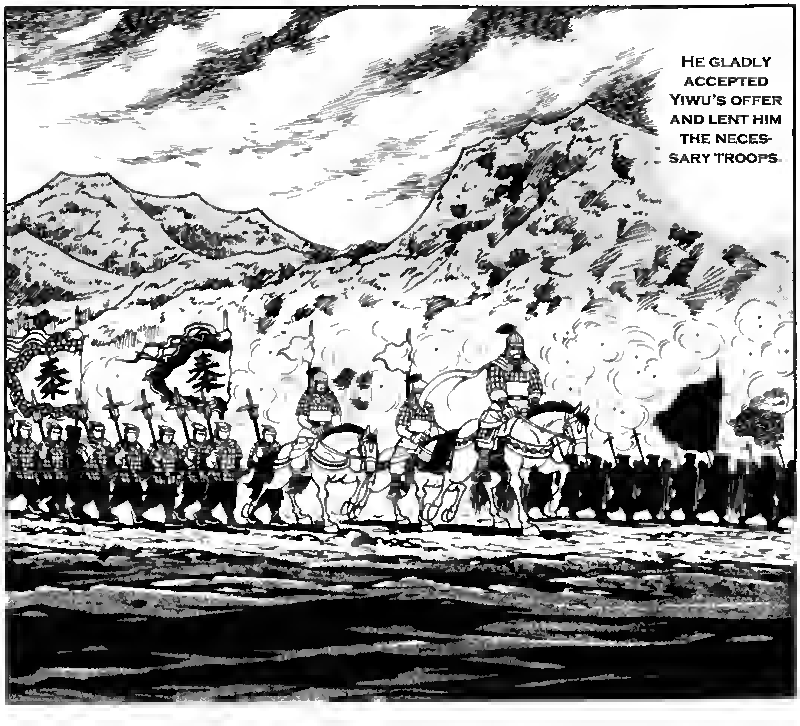

YES, SIR.
AS FOR YOU, LU SHENG, YOU ARE TO GO TO JIN AND GIVE LI KE MY ANSWER.

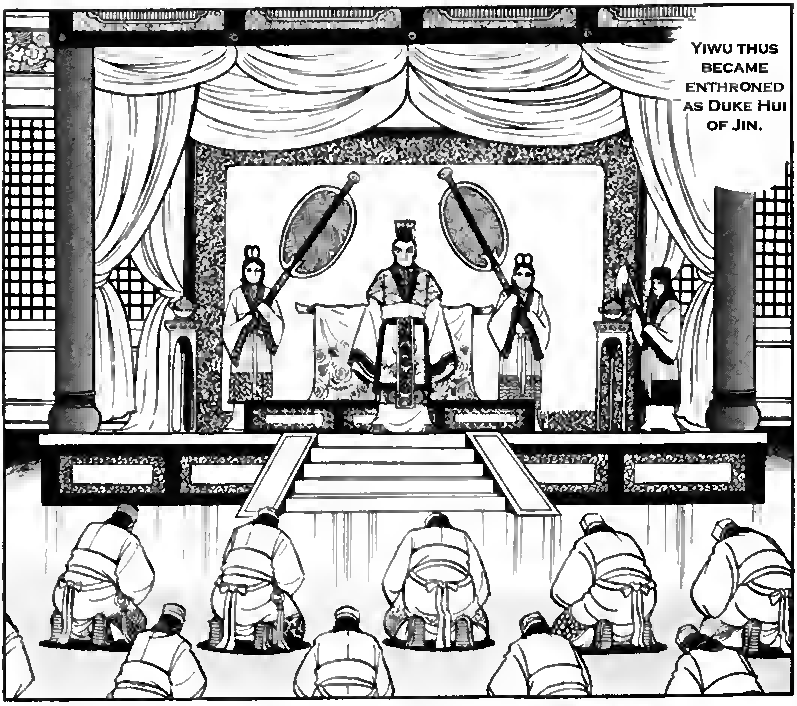
14


XI RUI THUS HEADED TO QIN WITH MANY GIFTS.

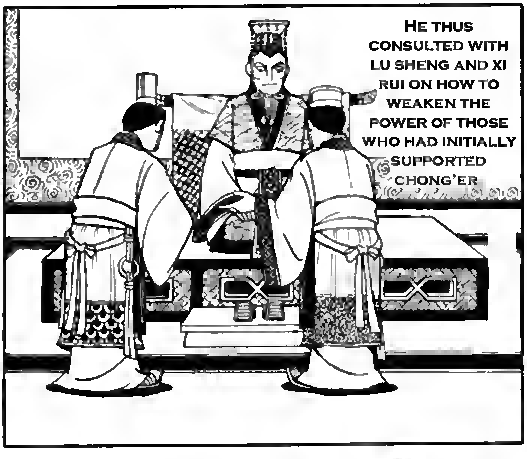

ALTHOUGH QIN WAS LOCATED ON THE VERY NORTHWESTERN EDGE OF THE ZHOU REALM, ITS RULER, DUKE MU, WAS RENOWNED AS A POWERFUL DUKE ACROSS THE WHOLE REALM

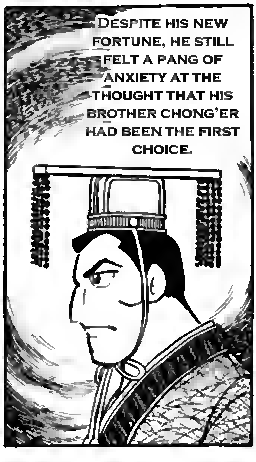
15


HE GLADLY ACCEPTED YIWU'S OFFER AND LENT HIM THE NECESSARY TROOPS
秦
秦


Yiwu thus became enthroned as Duke Hui of Jin.

16


He thus consulted with Lu Sheng and Xi Rui on how to weaken the power of those who had initially supported Chong'er

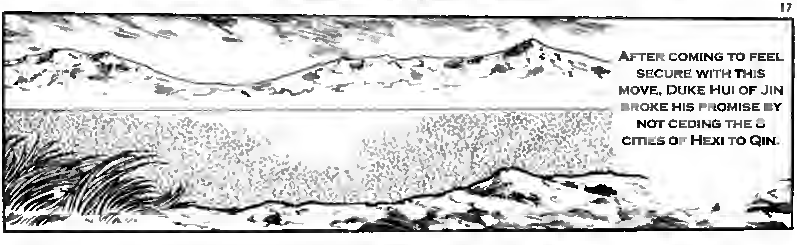

Despite his new fortune, he still felt a pang of anxiety at the thought that his brother Chong'er had been the first choice.

Their solution was to convict Li Ke and Pei Zheng, the two leaders behind the coup against Li Ji.

The two were promptly executed.

Pei Zneng's son Pei Bao, managed to escape to Qin where he plotted his revenge.

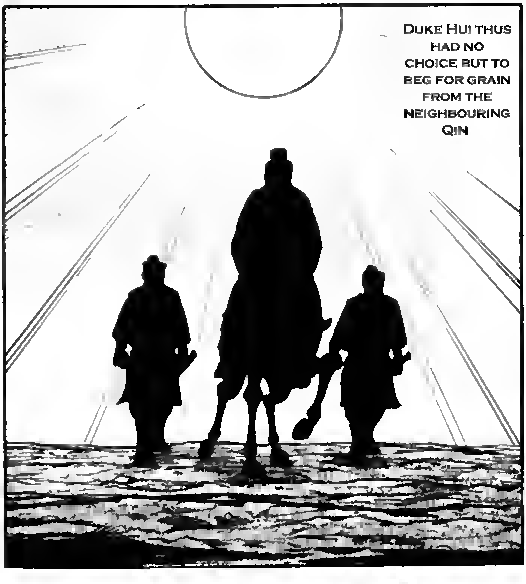
17

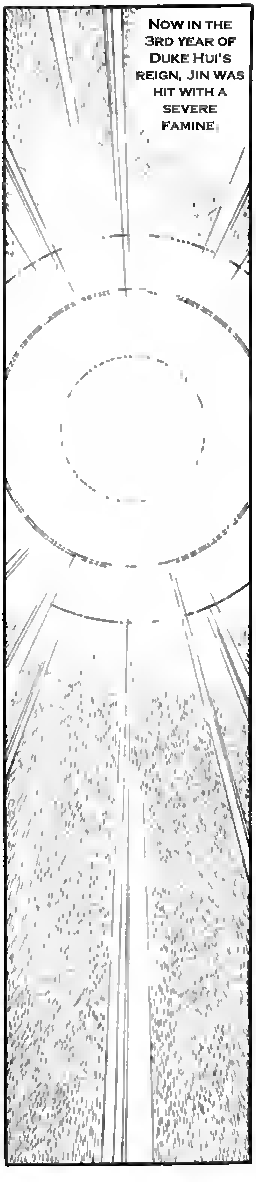

After coming to feel secure with this move, Duke Hui of Jin broke his promise by not ceding the 5 cities of Hexi to Qin.

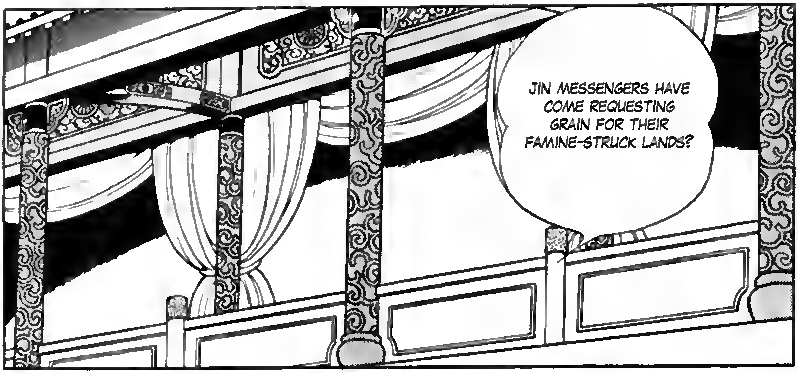
Dead bodies of thdse who had starved to death,

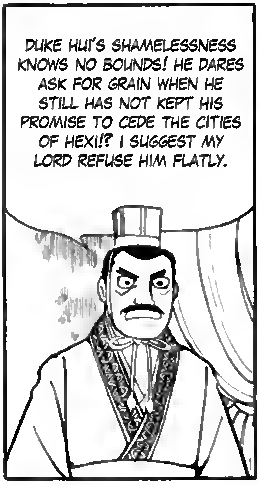
Were seen across the lands

18


Duke Hui thus had no choice but to beg for grain from the neighbouring Qin


Now in the 3rd year of Duke Hui's reign, Jin was hit with a severe famine.


JIN MESSENGERS HAVE COME REQUESTING GRAIN FOR THEIR FAMINE-STRUCK LANDS?

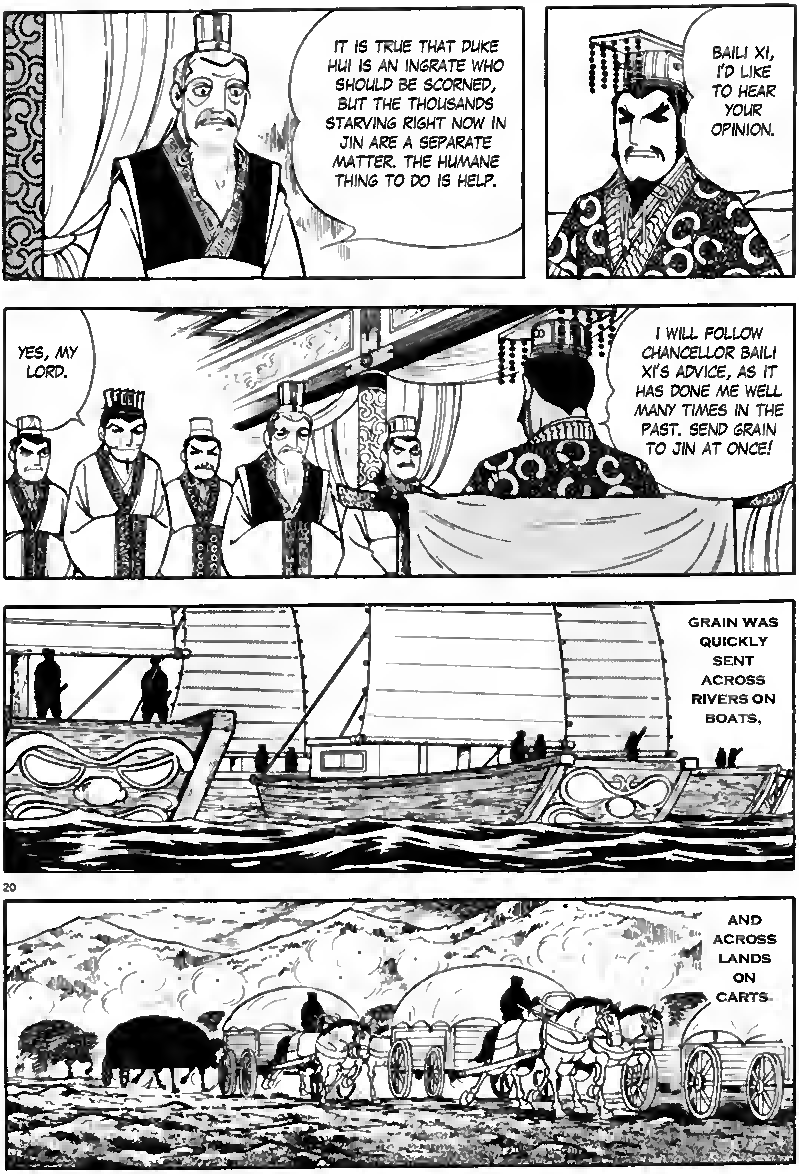

DUKE HUI'S SHAMELESSNESS KNOWS NO BOUNDS! HE DARES ASK FOR GRAIN WHEN HE STILL HAS NOT KEPT HIS PROMISE TO CEDE THE CITIES OF HEXI!? I SUGGEST MY LORD REFUSE HIM FLATLY.

WHAT DO YOU GENTLEMEN THINK?

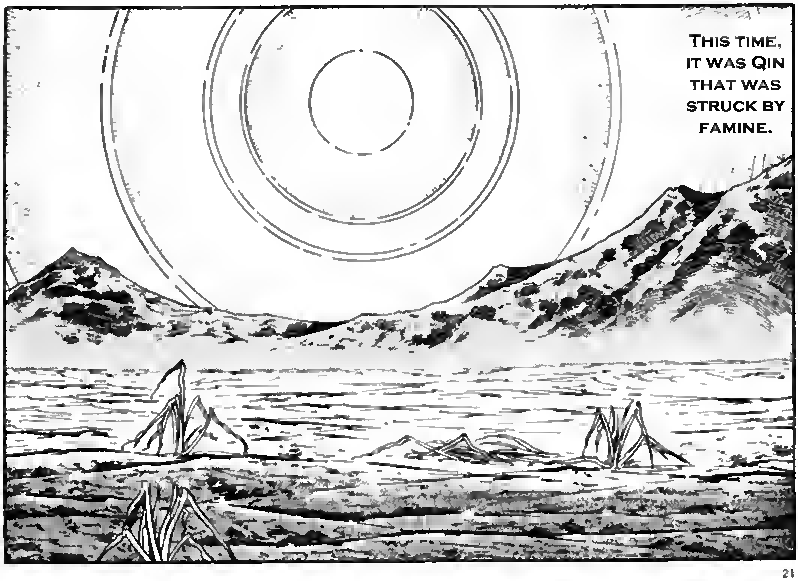
19

NO, TO FURTHER EXPLOIT THE MISFORTUNES OF OTHERS WHILE THEY'RE DOWN ON THEIR LUCK WOULD BE WRONG.

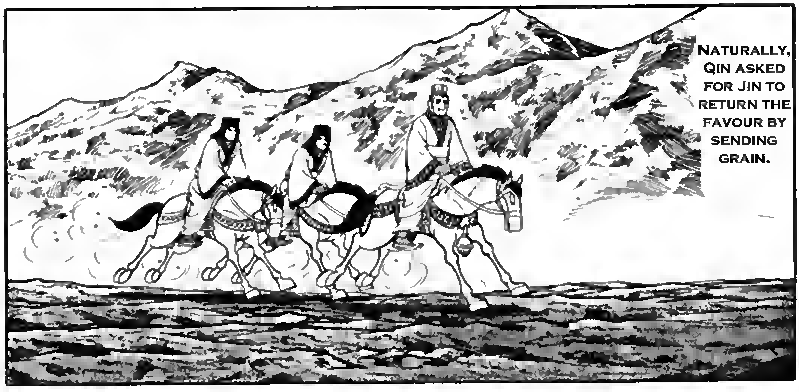
I SAY WE USE THIS CHANCE TO STRIKE JIN!

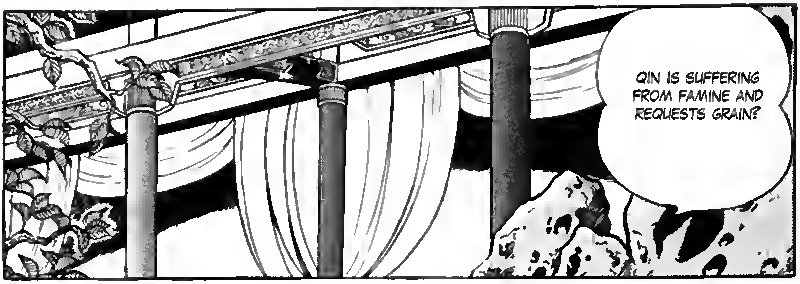

IT IS TRUE THAT DUKE HUI IS AN INGRATE WHO SHOULD BE SCORNED, BUT THE THOUSANDS STARVING RIGHT NOW IN JIN ARE A SEPARATE MATTER. THE HUMANE THING TO DO IS HELP.
BAILI XI, I'D LIKE TO HEAR YOUR OPINION.
YES, MY LORD.
I WILL FOLLOW CHANCELLOR BAILI XI'S ADVICE, AS IT HAS DONE ME WELL MANY TIMES IN THE PAST. SEND GRAIN TO JIN AT ONCE!
GRAIN WAS QUICKLY SENT ACROSS RIVERS ON BOATS,
AND ACROSS LANDS ON CARTS.

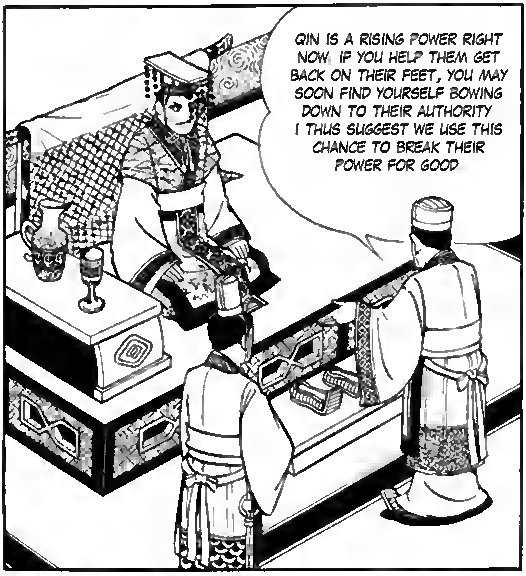
TWO YEARS LATER...


THIS TIME, IT WAS QIN THAT WAS STRUCK BY FAMINE.

21


NATURALLY, QIN ASKED FOR JIN TO RETURN THE FAVOUR BY SENDING GRAIN.


QIN IS SUFFERING FROM FAMINE AND REQUESTS GRAIN?


QIN IS A RISING POWER RIGHT NOW. IF YOU HELP THEM GET BACK ON THEIR FEET, YOU MAY SOON FIND YOURSELF BOWING DOWN TO THEIR AUTHORITY
I THUS SUGGEST WE USE THIS CHANCE TO BREAK THEIR POWER FOR GOOD

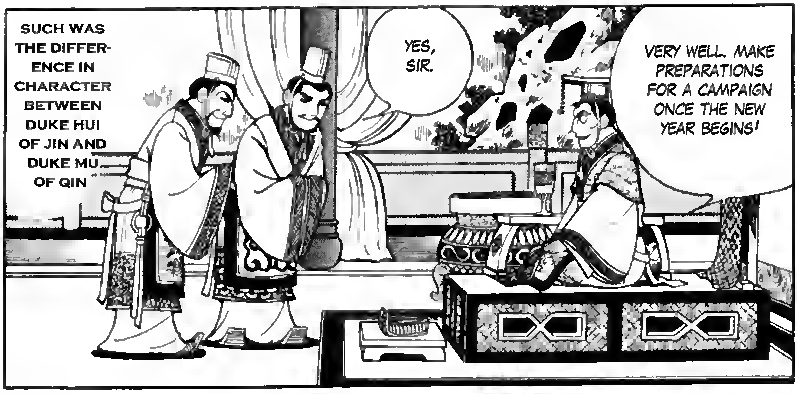
I SUPPOSE I SHOULD HELP THEM THEN

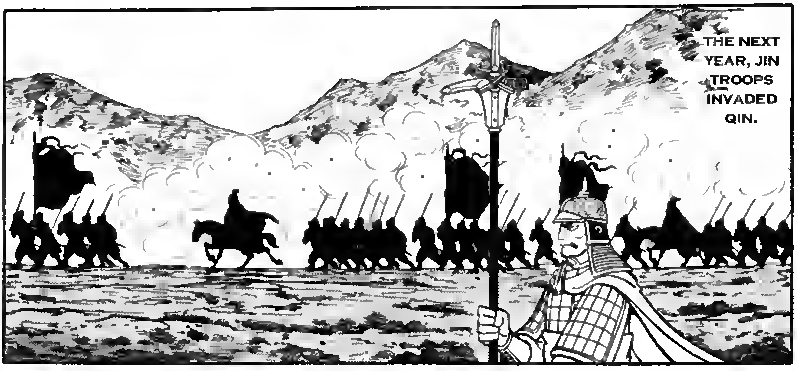
PLEASE WAIT A MOMENT, MY LORD.

22

HM...

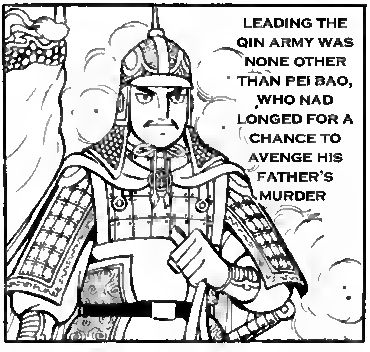
I CONCUR.


SUCH WAS THE DIFFERENCE IN CHARACTER BETWEEN DUKE HUI OF JIN AND DUKE MU OF QIN
YES, SIR.
VERY WELL. MAKE PREPARATIONS FOR A CAMPAIGN ONCE THE NEW YEAR BEGINS!


THE NEXT YEAR, JIN TROOPS INVADED QIN.

23

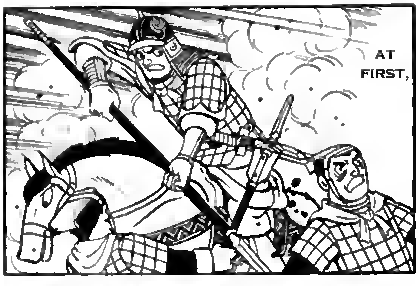
DUKE MU OF QIN ALSO DONNED HIS ARMOUR AND LED A SEPARATE FORCE FOR THE COMING BATTLE


LEADING THE QIN ARMY WAS NONE OTHER THAN PEI BAO, WHO HAD LONGED FOR A CHANCE TO AVENGE HIS FATHER'S MURDER

THE DECISIVE BATTLE WAS FOUGHT AT HANYUAN.

24

AND DUKE MU WAS EVEN WOUNDED.


AT FIRST,

QIN TROOPS WERE PUSHED BACK,

However, the momentum eventually turned,

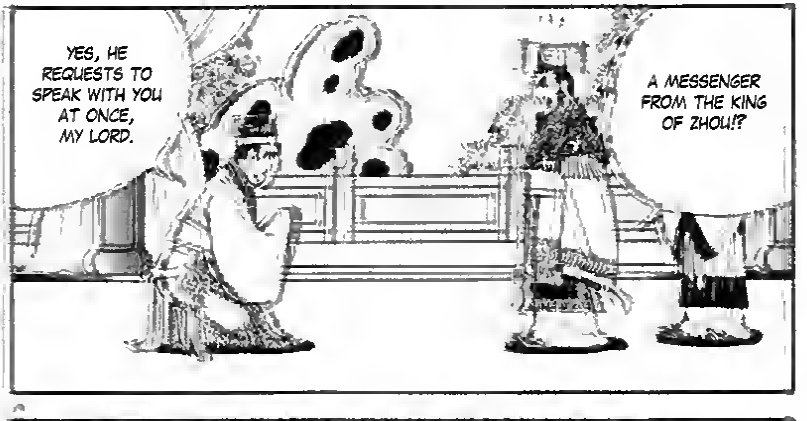
And Duke Hui, who had charged too deep into enemy lines, was surrounded and captured.

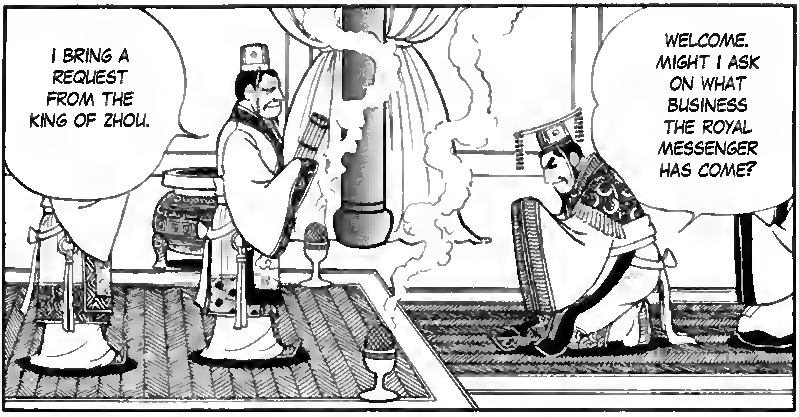
25

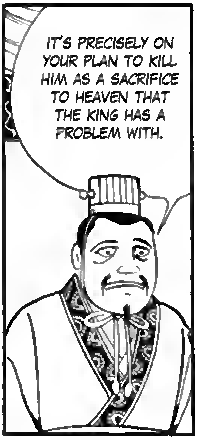
Duke Mu paraded him back to the capital as a victory trophy.

*TL NOTE: SORRY, THE IMAGE FOR THIS PAGE IS CORRUPTED.

TO PROJECT HIS MIGHT AND PUNISH THE EVIL-DOER, DUKE MU ANNOUNCED TO THE WHOLE ZHOU REALM THAT HE WOULD SACRIFICE HIS CAPTIVE TO HEAVEN.




I BRING A REQUEST FROM THE KING OF ZHOU.
WELCOME. MIGHT I ASK ON WHAT BUSINESS THE ROYAL MESSENGER HAS COME?


IT'S PRECISELY ON YOUR PLAN TO KILL HIM AS A SACRIFICE TO HEAVEN THAT THE KING HAS A PROBLEM WITH.

IT CONCERNS DUKE HUI OF JIN. THE KING RECENTLY LEARNED YOU TOOK HIM CAPTIVE IN BATTLE.

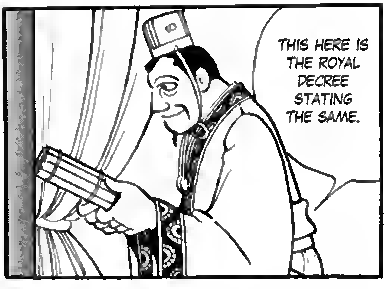
YES, I ANNOUNCED HIS CRIMES TO THE WHOLE REALM AS WELL SO AS TO JUSTIFY KILLING HIM AS A SACFICE TO HEAVEN.

AND THAT IS...?

27

AS THE RULING HOUSE OF JIN AND THE ROYAL HOUSE OF ZHOU ARE BOTH DESCENDED FROM THE ANCESTRAL HOUSE OF JI, THE KING PLEADS TO YOU TO SHOW MERCY.

I WILL GIVE SERIOUS THOUGHT TO IT THEN.

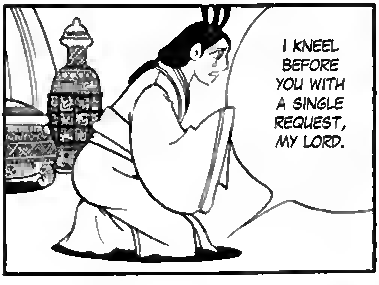

THIS HERE IS THE ROYAL DECREE STATING THE SAME.

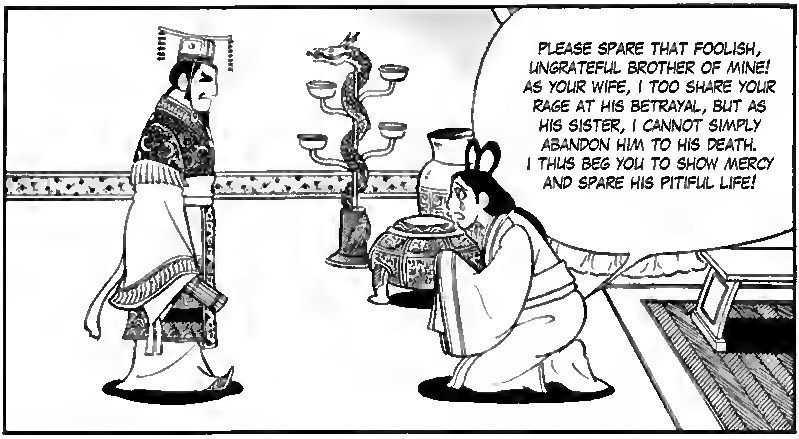
HM...?

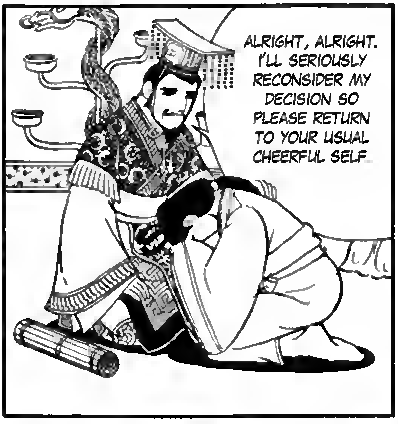
TO THINK THE KING HIMSELF WOULD MAKE A PLEA ON DUKE HUI'S BEHALF.

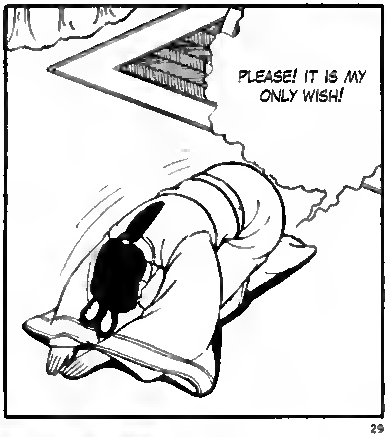
WHY ARE YOU DRESSED IN FUNERAL CLOTHES, MY DEAR?

28


I KNEEL BEFORE YOU WITH A SINGLE REQUEST, MY LORD.

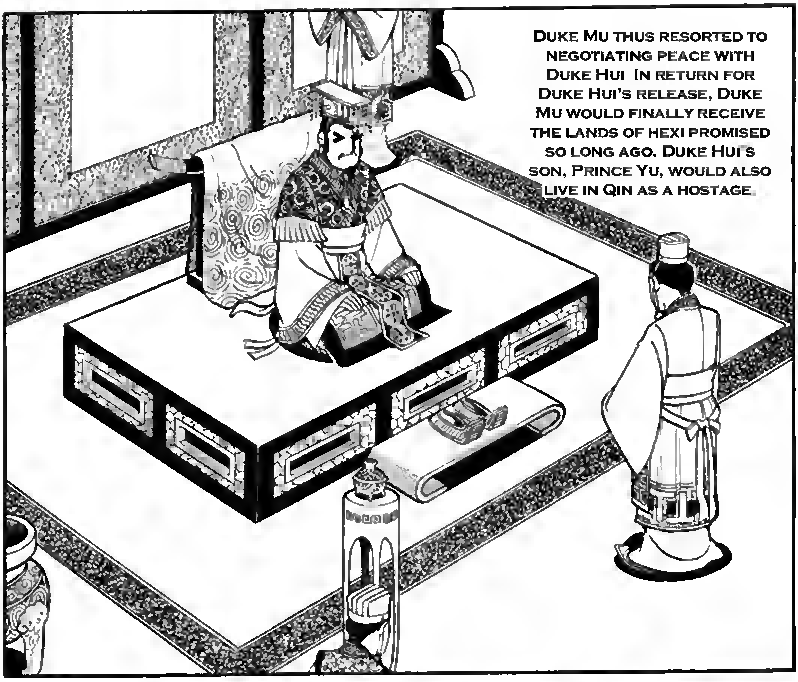

PLEASE SPARE THAT FOOLISH, UNGRATEFUL BROTHER OF MINE! AS YOUR WIFE, I TOO SHARE YOUR RAGE AT HIS BETRAYAL, BUT AS HIS SISTER, I CANNOT SIMPLY ABANDON HIM TO HIS DEATH. I THUS BEG YOU TO SHOW MERCY AND SPARE HIS PITIFUL LIFE!


ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT. I'LL SERIOUSLY RECONSIDER MY DECISION SO PLEASE RETURN TO YOUR USUAL CHEERFUL SELF

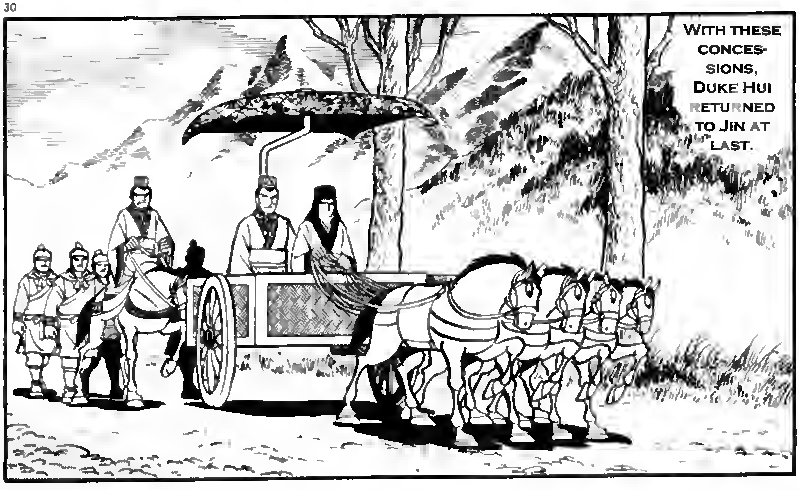

PLEASE! IT IS MY ONLY WISH!

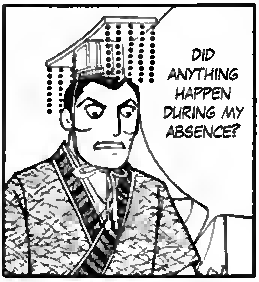
29

GREAT... WITH BOTH THE KING AND MY WIFE'S HYSTERICAL DEMANDS, HOW COULD I POSSIBLY GO THROUGH WITH THE SACRIFICE NOW ..?


Duke Mu thus resorted to negotiating peace with Duke Hui. In return for Duke Hui's release, Duke Mu would finally receive the lands of Hexi promised so long ago. Duke Hui's son, Prince Yu, would also live in Qin as a hostage.

30


With these concessions, Duke Hui returned to Jin at last.

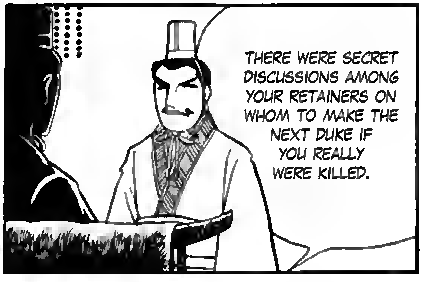

DID ANYTHING HAPPEN DURING MY ABSENCE?

FOR A MOMENT, I REALLY THOUGHT ALL WAS LOST.
WELCOME BACK, MY LORD. IT SEEMS THE KING'S PLEA HAS HAD ITS EFFECT.

THERE IS ONE THING.

31

OH REALLY? AND WHOM DID MOST PEOPLE BACK?

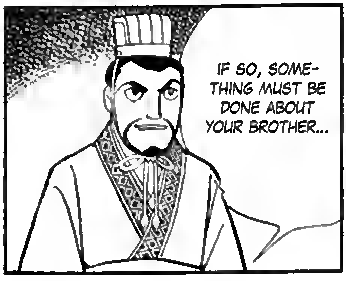

THERE WERE SECRET DISCUSSIONS AMONG YOUR RETAINERS ON WHOM TO MAKE THE NEXT DUKE IF YOU REALLY WERE KILLED.

THE ANXIETY THAT HE ONCE FELT AT BEING THE SECOND CHOICE NOW RESURFACED AGAIN.
MY BROTHER?

CHONG'ER BY FAR, SIR.

I WISH TO HAVE MY SON, YU, SUCCEED ME.

HMM...
IT SEEMS CHONG'ER'S SUPPORT IS STRONGER THAN EVER IN LIGHT OF RECENT EVENTS.


IF SO, SOMETHING MUST BE DONE ABOUT YOUR BROTHER...

32

YES, AS LONG AS HE'S ALIVE...

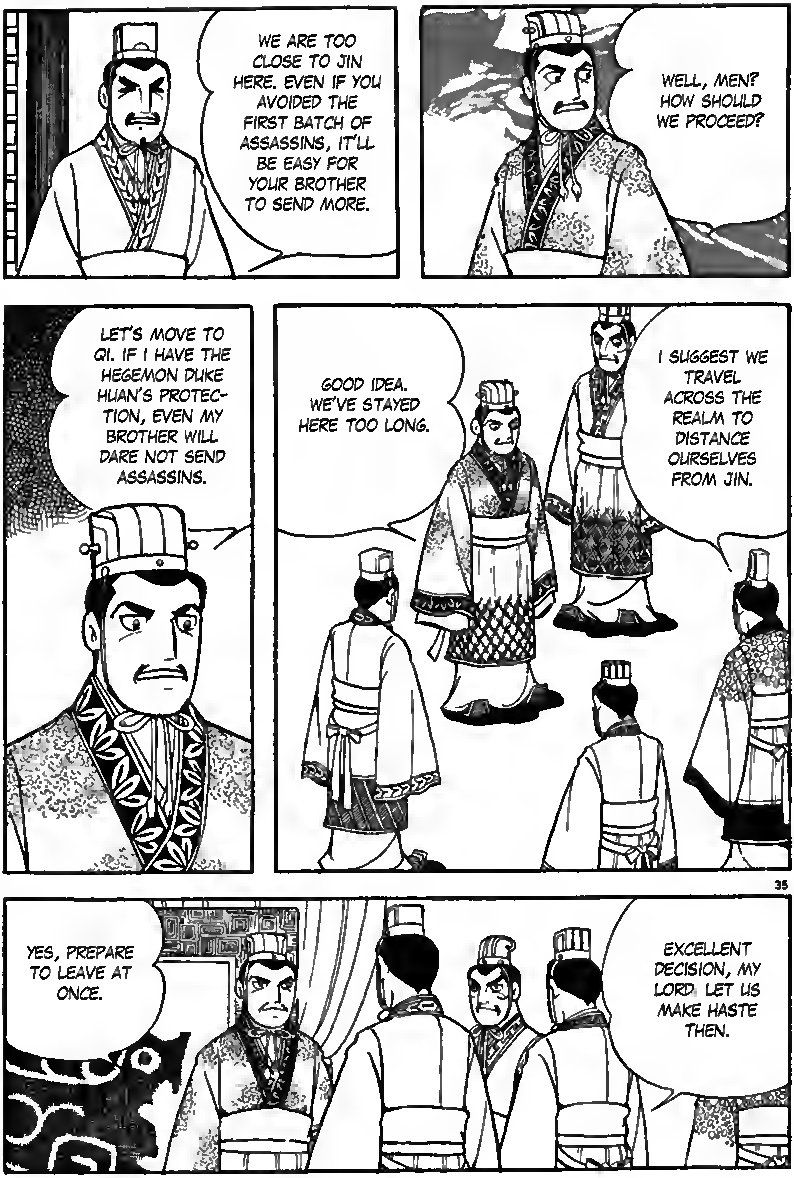
SO MY SON WON'T BE ABLE TO SECURE ENOUGH SUPPORT TO BECOME THE NEXT DUKE AS LONG AS CHONG'ER IS ALIVE, IS THAT IT...?

YOUR CHOICE WILL DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT JIN WILL FALL INTO CIVIL WAR AFTER YOUR DEATH.
FINE, IF IT'S FOR THE PEACE AND STABILITY OF JIN, I WILL GO THROUGH WITH IT.
HMM...
33
DUKE HUI MADE THE FATEFUL DECISION TO SEND ASSASSINS AGAINST HIS OLDER BROTHER.

BUT THERE WERE SOME MEN IN JIN WHO RUSHED TO ALERT CHONG'ER ABOUT HIS PERIL

YOU MUST FLEE TO A SAFE PLACE AT ONCE, SIR!
MY OWN BROTHER HAS SENT ASSASSINS AFTER ME...!?

YOUR WORDS ARE TOO KIND, SIR.
THANK YOU FOR WARNING ME. I DO NOT HAVE ANYTHING I CAN GIVE YOU AS A REWARD FOR NOW, BUT I WILL NEVER FORGET MY DEBT TO YOU.

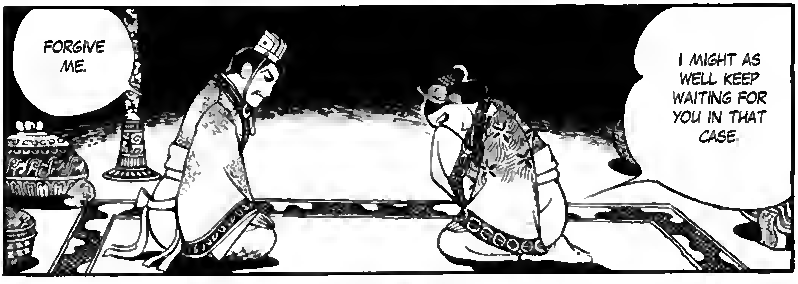

WE ARE TOO CLOSE TO JIN HERE. EVEN IF YOU AVOIDED THE FIRST BATCH OF ASSASSINS, IT'LL BE EASY FOR YOUR BROTHER TO SEND MORE.
WELL, MEN? HOW SHOULD WE PROCEED?
LET'S MOVE TO QI. IF I HAVE THE HEGEMON DUKE HUAN'S PROTECTION, EVEN MY BROTHER WILL DARE NOT SEND ASSASSINS.
GOOD IDEA. WE'VE STAYED HERE TOO LONG.
I SUGGEST WE TRAVEL ACROSS THE REALM TO DISTANCE OURSELVES FROM JIN.
35
YES, PREPARE TO LEAVE AT ONCE.
EXCELLENT DECISION, MY LORD. LET US MAKE HASTE THEN.

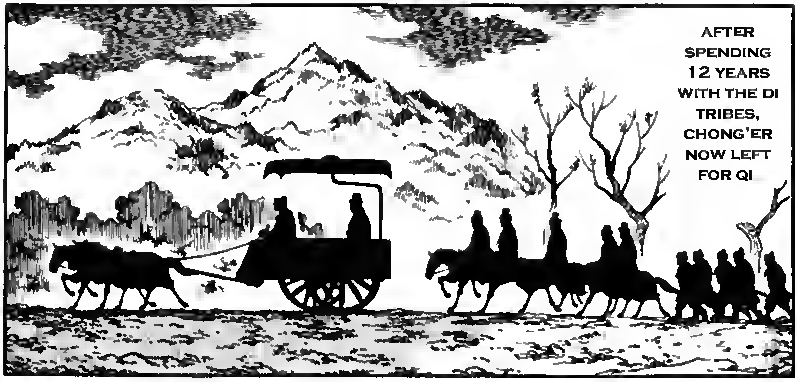
IF SUCH ARE THE CIRCUMSTANCES, THEN I SUPPOSE I SHOULD NOT OBJECT AS YOUR WIFE, AS PAINFUL AS IT IS TO SAY GOODBYE.
THAT'S HOW IT IS, JI WEI. I'M AFRAID I MUST LEAVE YOU HERE AND SEEK REFUGE IN QI.

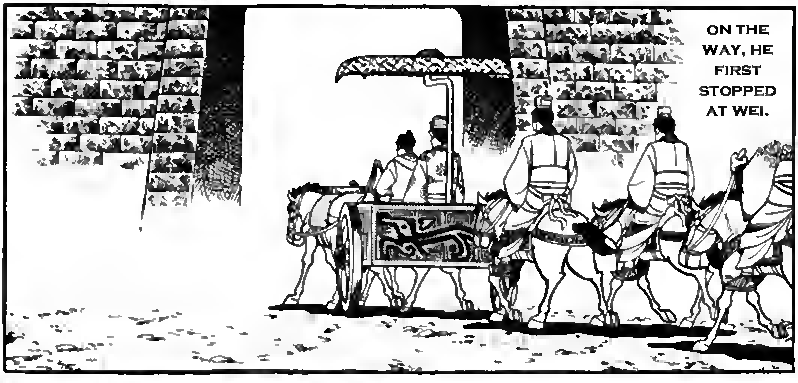
I AM 25 YEARS OF AGE ALREADY. WERE I TO SPEND 25 MORE YEARS WITHOUT A HUSBAND, I WILL SURELY BE IN MY GRAVE BY THEN.

I PROMISE I WILL RETURN FOR YOU ONE DAY. PLEASE TAKE CARE OF OUR CHILDREN UNTIL THEN. IF I AM UNABLE TO RETURN IN 25 YEARS, YOU ARE FREE TO FIND YOURSELF ANOTHER HUSBAND.

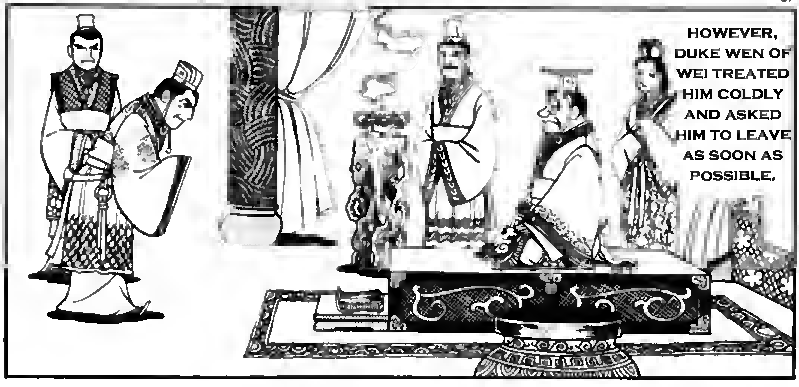
36


FORGIVE ME.
I MIGHT AS WELL KEEP WAITING FOR YOU IN THAT CASE.

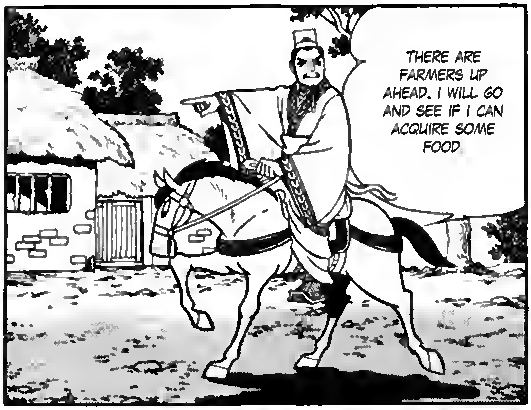

AFTER SPENDING 12 YEARS WITH THE DI TRIBES, CHONG'ER NOW LEFT FOR QI


ON THE WAY, HE FIRST STOPPED AT WEI.

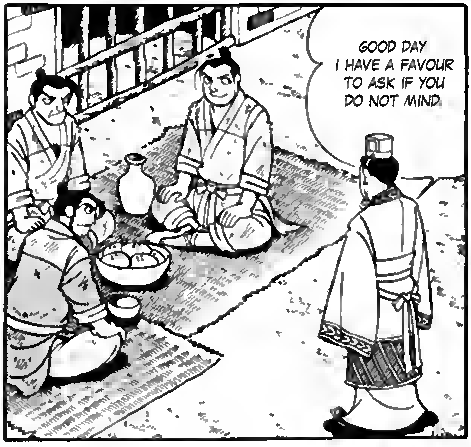
37


HOWEVER, DUKE WEN OF WEI TREATED HIM COLDLY AND ASKED HIM TO LEAVE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

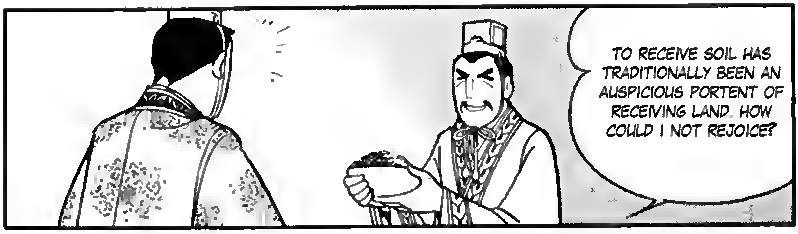
WHAT KIND OF DUKE WOULD TREAT A PRINCE OF THE REALM IN SUCH A COLD MANNER!? THAT MAN HAS NO CLASS!

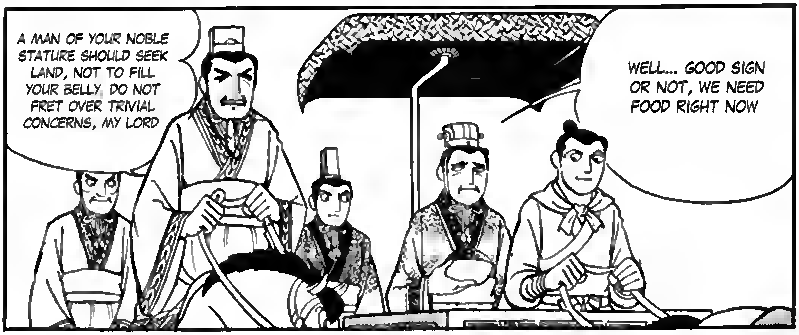

THERE ARE FARMERS UP AHEAD. I WILL GO AND SEE IF I CAN ACQUIRE SOME FOOD

JUST THINKING OF HIM MAKES ME SICK TO MY STOMACH!

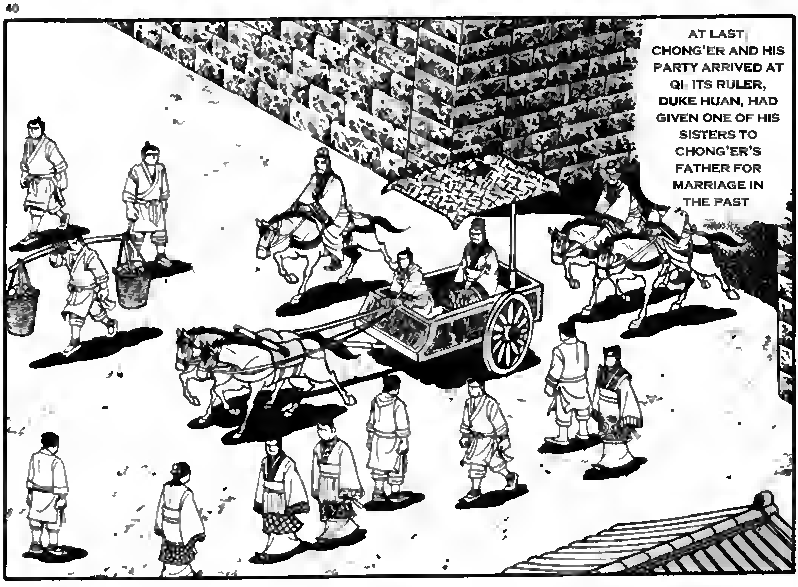

GOOD DAY I HAVE A FAVOUR TO ASK IF YOU DO NOT MIND.

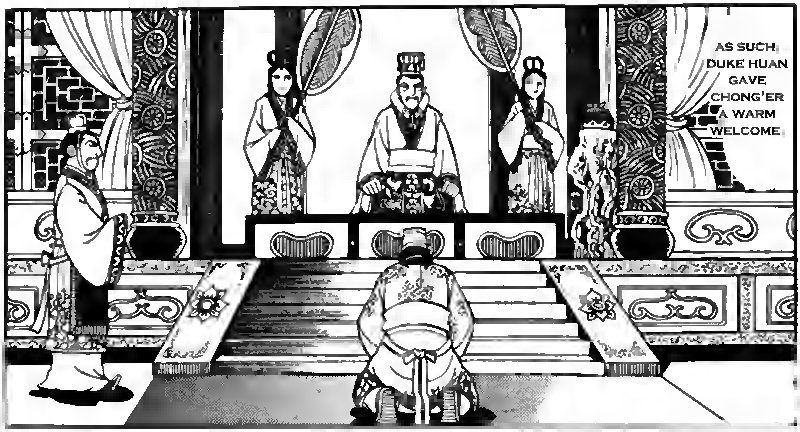
CAN YOU SHARE SOME FOOD WITH US TRAVEL-LERS?
WHAT!? HOW DARE THAT PEASANT SERVE US DIRT!
SURE, EAT UP!
?
?
THANK YOU. WE ARE MUCH OBLIGED.
39
WHAT!?
WHY WOULD I BE INSULTED AT SUCH A JOYOUS GIFT?
ZHAO CUI! HAVE YOU NO PRIDE!? HOW CAN YOU THANK HIM AFTER BEING SO INSULTED!?


TO RECEIVE SOIL HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN AN AUSPICIOUS PORTENT OF RECEIVING LAND. HOW COULD I NOT REJOICE?


A MAN OF YOUR NOBLE STATURE SHOULD SEEK LAND, NOT TO FILL YOUR BELLY. DO NOT FRET OVER TRIVIAL CONCERNS, MY LORD
WELL... GOOD SIGN OR NOT, WE NEED FOOD RIGHT NOW

46

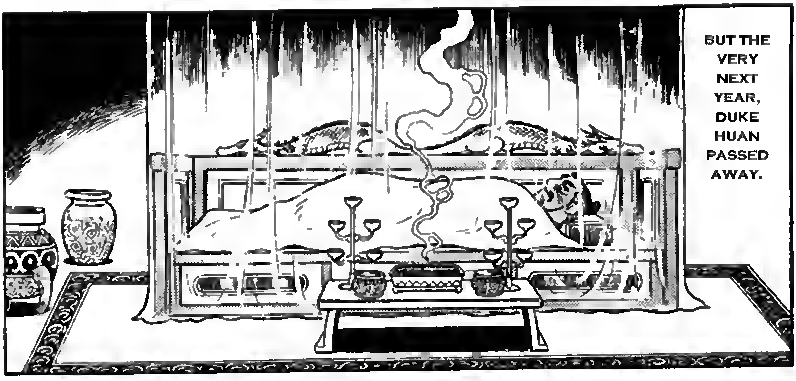

AT LAST, CHONG'ER AND HIS PARTY ARRIVED AT QI. ITS RULER, DUKE HUAN, HAD GIVEN ONE OF HIS SISTERS TO CHONG'ER'S FATHER FOR MARRIAGE IN THE PAST

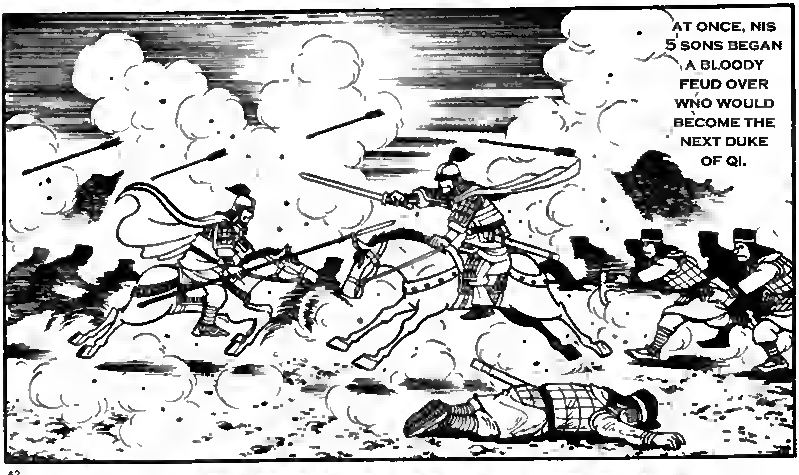

AS SUCH, DUKE HUAN GAVE CHONG'ER A WARM WELCOME.

HE BESTOWED ONE OF HIS FAMILY'S UNMARRIED WOMAN TO CHONG'ER FOR MARRIAGE

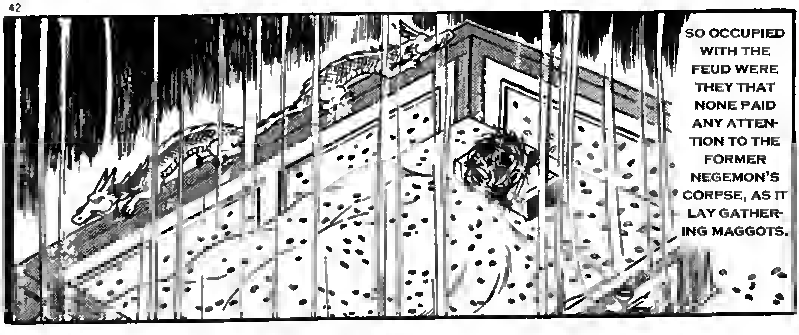
41

FOR A TIME, CHONG'ER ENJOYED A HAPPY LIFE IN QI WITH HIS NEW WIFE.

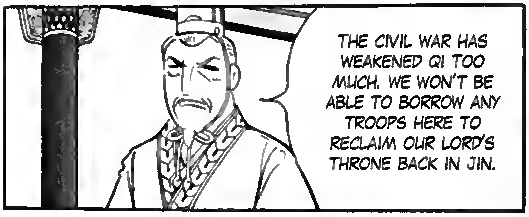

BUT THE VERY NEXT YEAR, DUKE HUAN PASSED AWAY.


AT ONCE, NIS 5 SONS BEGAN A BLOODY FEUD OVER WHO WOULD BECOME THE NEXT DUKE OF QI.

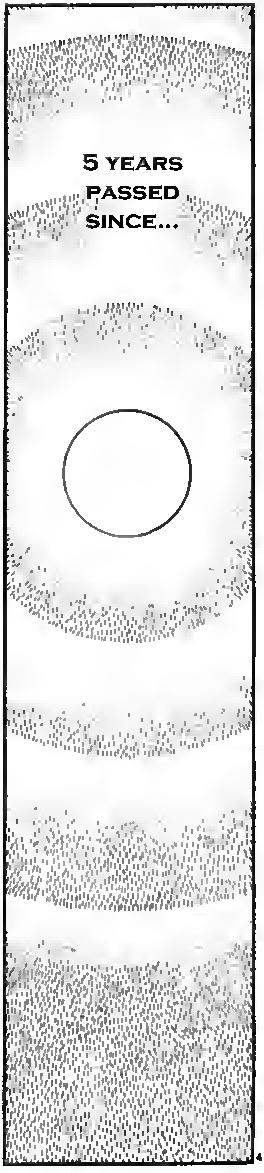
42


SO OCCUPIED WITH THE FEUD WERE THEY THAT NONE PAID ANY ATTENTION TO THE FORMER NEGEMON'S CORPSE, AS IT LAY GATHERING MAGGOTS.

I THINK HE HAS BECOME TOO COMFORTABLE WITH HIS NEW LIFE HERE. WOMEN AND ALCOHOL WASTES AWAY A MAN'S TALENTS.
DO YOU THINK OUR LORD HAS ANY INTENTION OF EVER RETURNING HOME?


THE CIVIL WAR HAS WEAKENED QI TOO MUCH. WE WON'T BE ABLE TO BORROW ANY TROOPS HERE TO RECLAIM OUR LORD'S THRONE BACK IN JIN.

WHAT OTHER CHOICE IS THERE? AT THIS RATE, OUR LORD WILL WASTE AWAY THE REST OF HIS LIFE.
YOU MEAN TO SAY WE SHOULD MOVE SOMEWHERE ELSE?


5 YEARS PASSED SINCE...

BE CAREFUL NOT TO LET THE PLAN LEAK. THE DUKE OF QI MIGHT NOT BE WILLING TO LET OUR LORD GO IF HE FINDS OUT.
VERY WELL. LET'S GET OUR LORD OUT FROM QI, EVEN IF WE HAVE TO USE FORCE.

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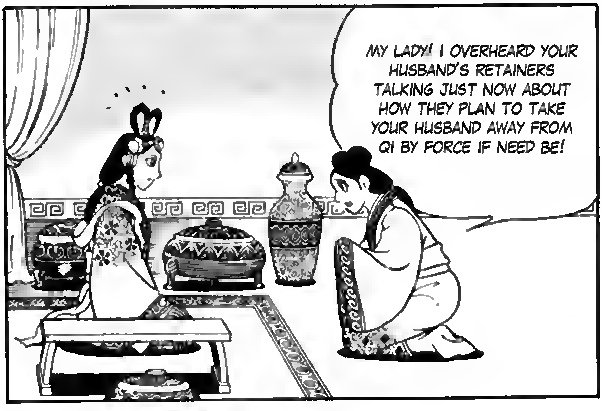
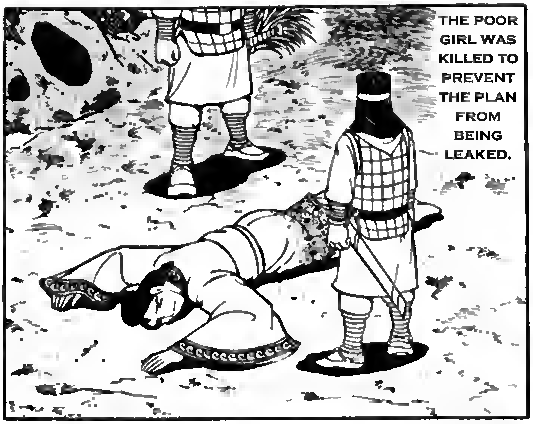
THIS IS MAJOR NEWS...!

THANK YOU FOR INFORMING ME.


MY LADY! I OVERHEARD YOUR HUSBAND'S RETAINERS TALKING JUST NOW ABOUT HOW THEY PLAN TO TAKE YOUR HUSBAND AWAY FROM QI BY FORCE IF NEED BE!

I BETTER SHUT HER UP BEFORE SHE LETS ANYONE ELSE KNOW...
YES, MA'AM?
THAT MAID WHO JUST WALKED OUT OFFENDED ME GREATLY. KILL HER AT ONCE!
AS YOU WISH.
?
YOU THERE!
WHAT?
HOW DARE YOU INSULT A NOBLE WOMAN OF THE RULING HOUSE!
TAKE YOUR PUNISH-MENT!


THE POOR GIRL WAS KILLED TO PREVENT THE PLAN FROM BEING LEAKED.

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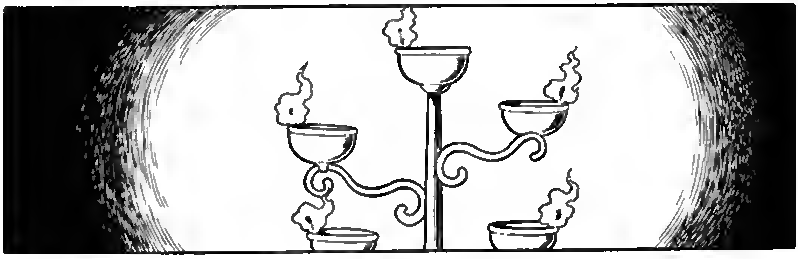
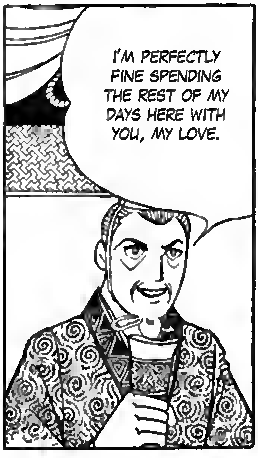
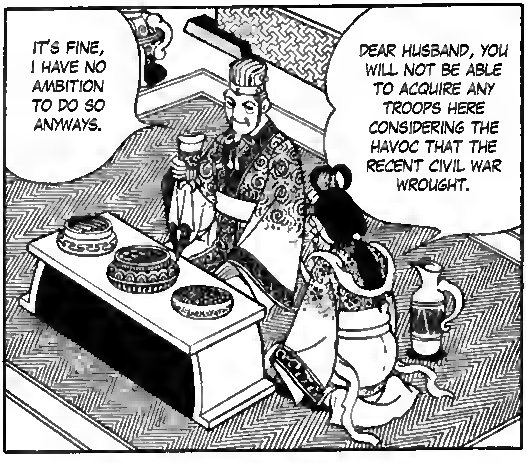


46

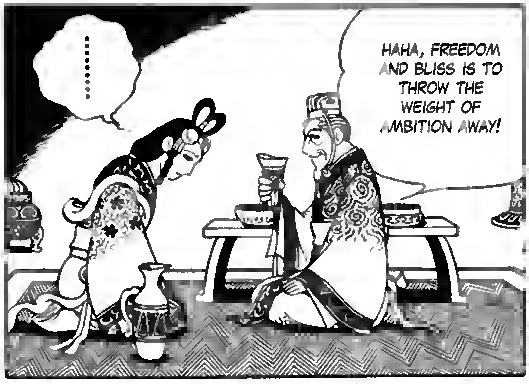

I'M PERFECTLY FINE SPENDING THE REST OF MY DAYS HERE WITH YOU, MY LOVE.


IT'S FINE, I HAVE NO AMBITION TO DO SO ANYWAYS.
DEAR HUSBAND, YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO ACQUIRE ANY TROOPS HERE CONSIDERING THE HAVOC THAT THE RECENT CIVIL WAR WROUGHT.

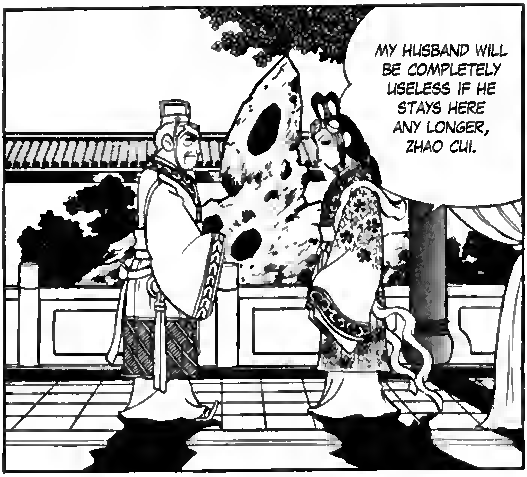
NO, THAT WILL NOT DO. I WILL REMAIN HERE TO ENJOY PEACE AND HAPPINESS
EVEN IF YOU ARE AN EXILE, YOU ARE STILL A PRINCE OF JIN. YOU MUST FIND A WAY TO TRIUMPHANTLY RETURN TO JIN TO NOT ONLY LIVE UP TO YOUR ANCESTRY, BUT TO ALSO LIVE UP TO THE HOPES OF YOUR RETAINERS WHO'VE SERVED YOU LOYALLY ALL THESE YEARS.

I AM ALREADY 60, MY DEAR. DO YOU BEGRUDGE THIS OLD MAN FOR WISHING TO SPEND HIS LAST FEW YEARS IN PEACE?
I AM FLATTERED THAT YOU FIND YOUR DAYS WITH ME SO ENJOYABLE, BUT I DO NOT WISH TO BE AN OBSTACLE THAT PREVENTS YOU FROM ACHIEVING GREATER THINGS IN LIFE.

47


.....
HAHA, FREEDOM AND BLISS IS TO THROW THE WEIGHT OF AMBITION AWAY!

NOW POUR ME A DRINK, WILL YOU?


MY HUSBAND WILL BE COMPLETELY USELESS IF HE STAYS HERE ANY LONGER, ZHAO CUI.

THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR AID AND UNDER-STANDING
I WILL GET HIM VERY DRUNK TONIGHT SO PLEASE TAKE HIM AWAY WHEN HE FALLS DEEP ASLEEP TONIGHT.

48

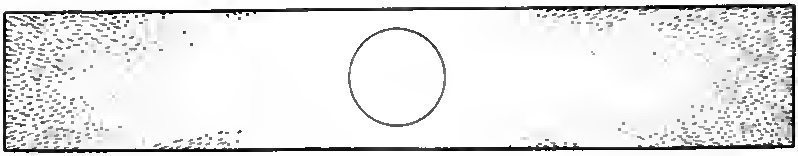
AS PLANNED, CHONG'ER DRANK HEAVILY AT THE INSIST-ENCE OF HIS WIFE THAT NIGHT

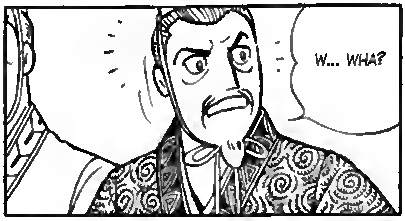
HIS RETAINERS THEN CARRIED THEIR SLEEPING LORD ONTO A CHARIOT.

THERE IS NO NEED TO THANK ME. IT WOULD BE A TRUE TRAGEDY TO SEE MY HUSBAND BE BURIED HERE WITHOUT HAVING ACCOMPLISHED ANYTHING SUBSTANTIAL. I SHOULD BE THE ONE THANKING YOU.
WE WILL NEVER FORGET YOUR AID, MA'AM.

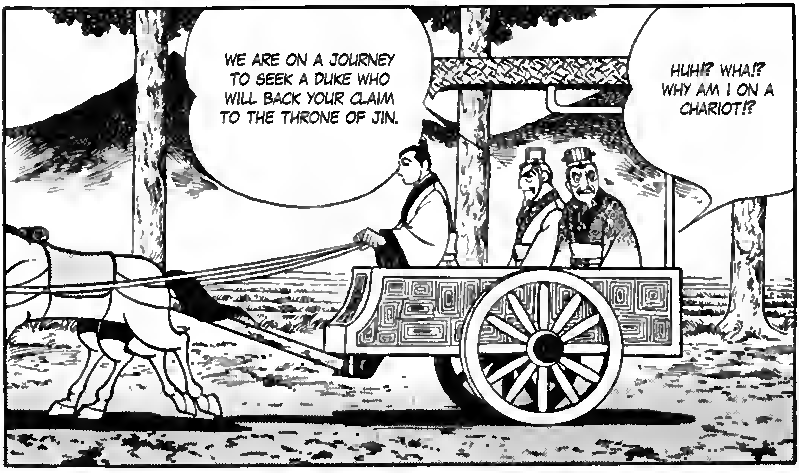
49

CHONG'ER AND HIS PARTY RODE AWAY FROM QI BEFORE THE SUN WAS UP.




W... WHA?

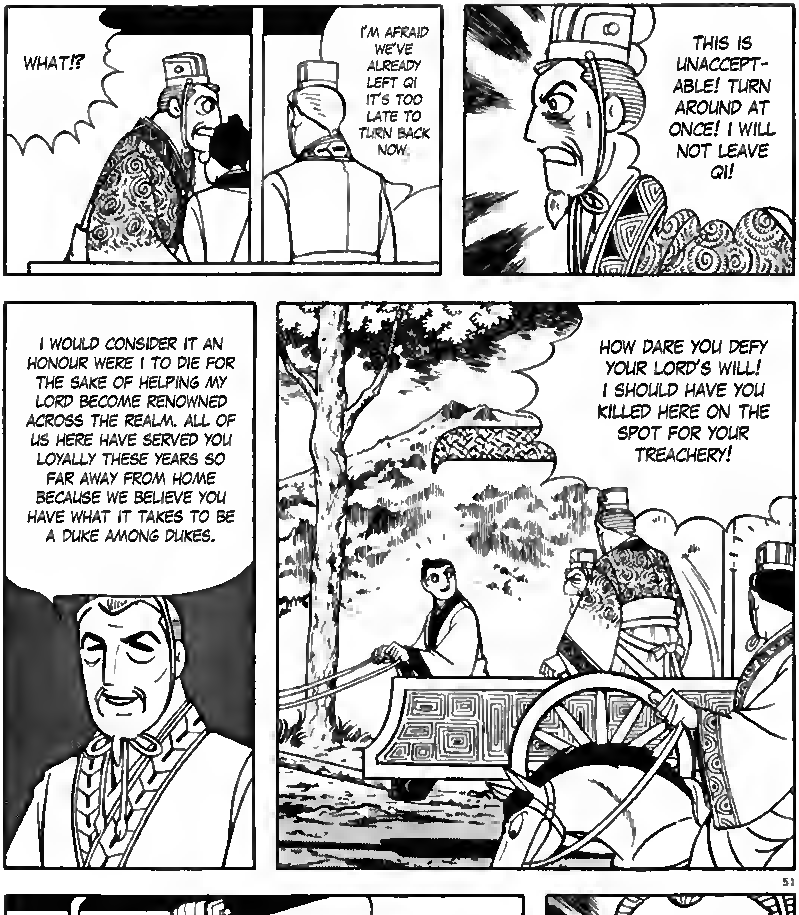
MMN...

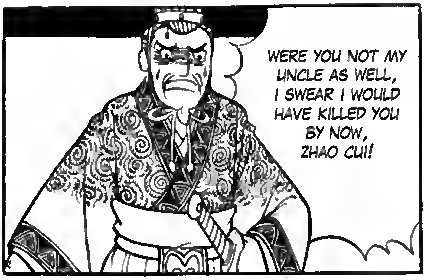

WE ARE ON A JOURNEY TO SEEK A DUKE WHO WILL BACK YOUR CLAIM TO THE THRONE OF JIN.
HUH!? WHA!? WHY AM I ON A CHARIOT!?

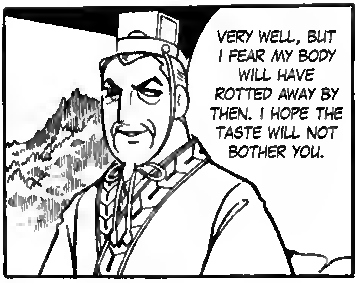
50

WE DID CONSULT WITH YOUR WIFE, HOWEVER.
AND YOU DECIDED THIS WITHOUT CONSULTING ME!?

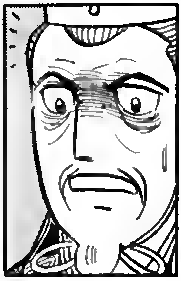
WHAT!?


WHAT!?
I'M AFRAID WE'VE ALREADY LEFT QI. IT'S TOO LATE TO TURN BACK NOW.
THIS IS UNACCEPTABLE! TURN AROUND AT ONCE! I WILL NOT LEAVE QI!
I WOULD CONSIDER IT AN HONOUR WERE I TO DIE FOR THE SAKE OF HELPING MY LORD BECOME RENOWNED ACROSS THE REALM. ALL OF US HERE HAVE SERVED YOU LOYALLY THESE YEARS SO FAR AWAY FROM HOME BECAUSE WE BELIEVE YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A DUKE AMONG DUKES.
HOW DARE YOU DEFY YOUR LORD'S WILL! I SHOULD HAVE YOU KILLED HERE ON THE SPOT FOR YOUR TREACHERY!
51
FINE! THEN IF YOU FAIL TO MAKE ME RENOWNED, I WILL EAT YOUR VERY FLESH AS RETRIBUTION!


WERE YOU NOT MY UNCLE AS WELL, I SWEAR I WOULD HAVE KILLED YOU BY NOW, ZHAO CUI!


VERY WELL, BUT I FEAR MY BODY WILL HAVE ROTTED AWAY BY THEN. I HOPE THE TASTE WILL NOT BOTHER YOU.

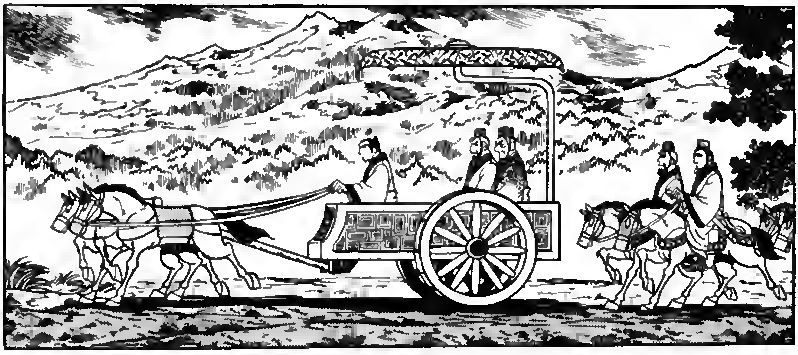
F-FINE, DO AS YOU WILL THEN!

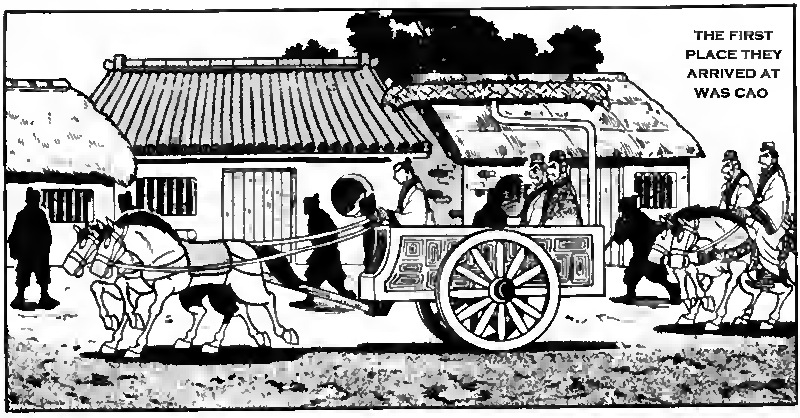


NO MATTER WHAT YOU SAY, WE WILL NOT LET OUR LORD DIE HAVING ACCOMPLISHED NOTHING SUBSTANTIAL IN LIFE. FEEL FREE TO KILL US ANY TIME IF YOU OBJECT SO STRONGLY AGAINST OUR WILL!

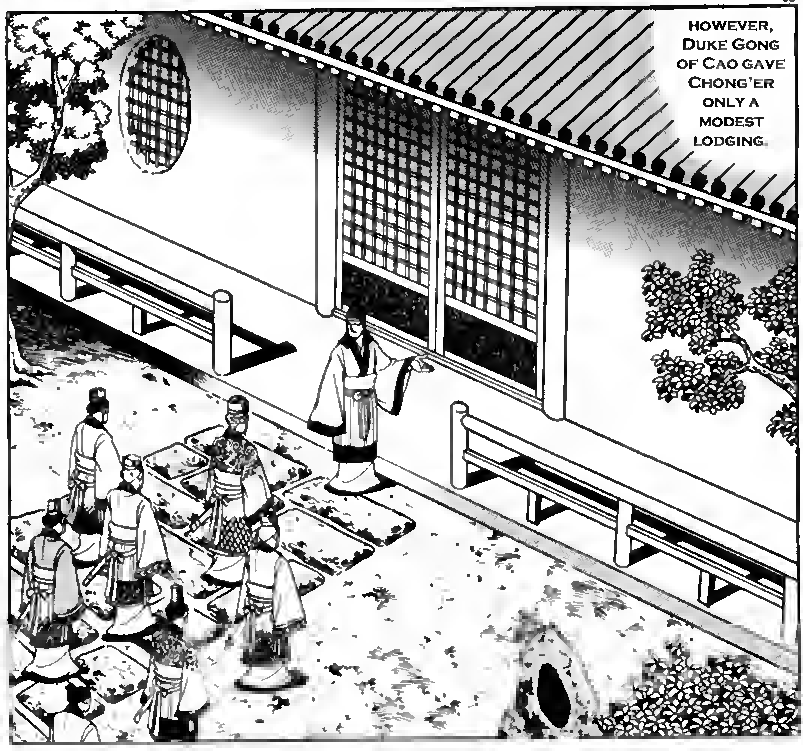
THERE YOU HAVE IT, MEN! WE NOW HAVE OUR LORD'S PERMISSION!

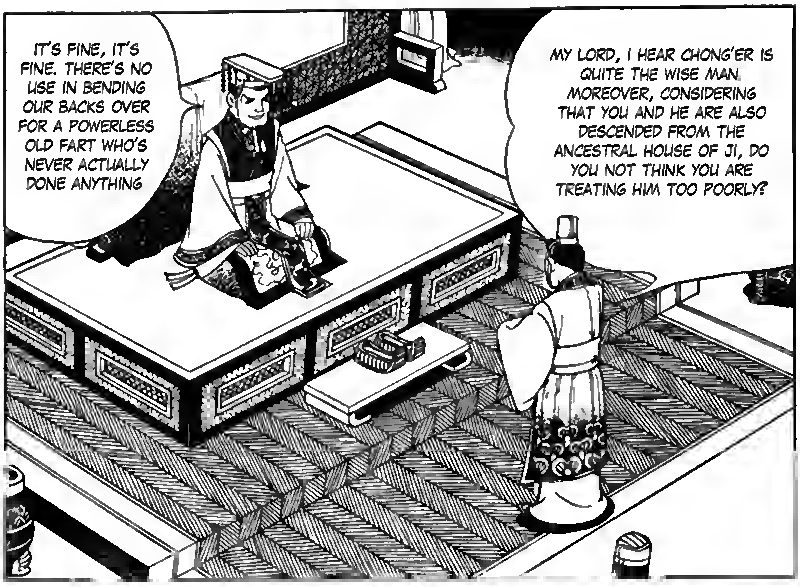
52




THE FIRST PLACE THEY ARRIVED AT WAS CAO

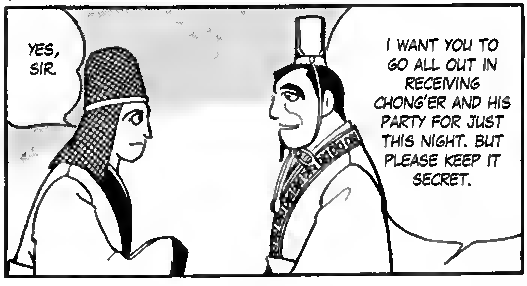
53


HOWEVER, DUKE GONG OF CAO GAVE CHONG'ER ONLY A MODEST LODGING.


IT'S FINE, IT'S FINE. THERE'S NO USE IN BENDING OUR BACKS OVER FOR A POWERLESS OLD FART WHO'S NEVER ACTUALLY DONE ANYTHING
MY LORD, I HEAR CHONG'ER IS QUITE THE WISE MAN. MOREOVER, CONSIDERING THAT YOU AND HE ARE ALSO DESCENDED FROM THE ANCESTRAL HOUSE OF JI, DO YOU NOT THINK YOU ARE TREATING HIM TOO POORLY?

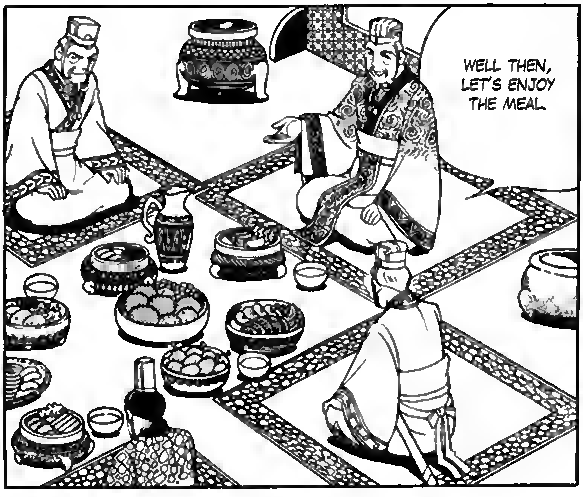
YES, SIR?
YOU THERE.

54

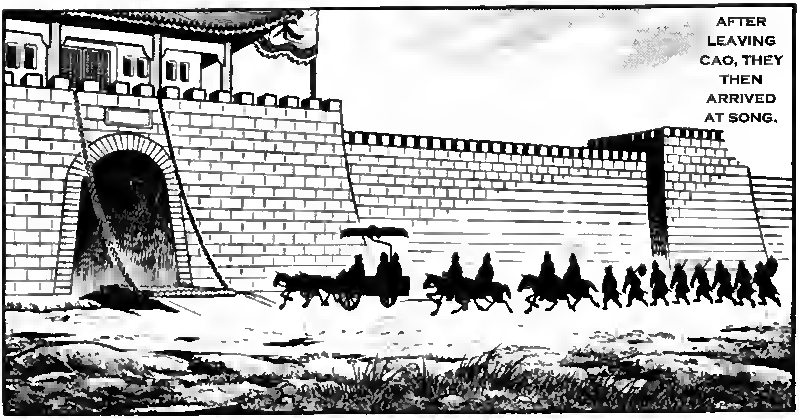

YES, SIR.
I WANT YOU TO GO ALL OUT IN RECEIVING CHONG'ER AND HIS PARTY FOR JUST THIS NIGHT. BUT PLEASE KEEP IT SECRET.

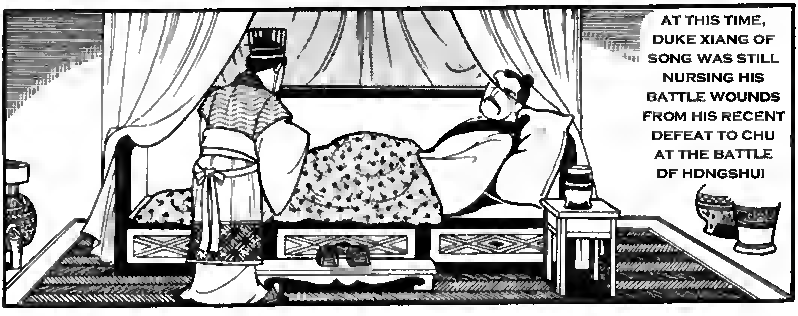
MASTER XI FUJI HOPES THESE DISHES WILL BE TO YOUR LIKING, SIRS.

55


WELL THEN, LET'S ENJOY THE MEAL.

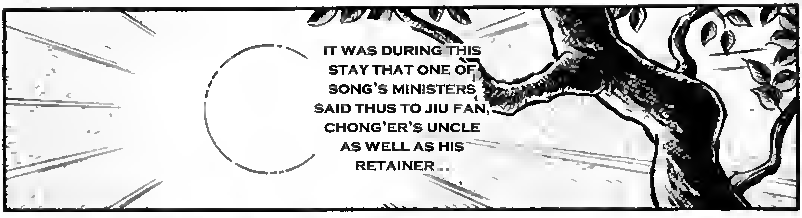
PLEASE TELL XI FUJI THAT I WILL NOT FORGET HIS KINDNESS.


AFTER LEAVING CAO, THEY THEN ARRIVED AT SONG.


AT THIS TIME, DUKE XIANG OF SONG WAS STILL NURSING HIS BATTLE WOUNDS FROM HIS RECENT DEFEAT TO CHU AT THE BATTLE OF HONGSHUI

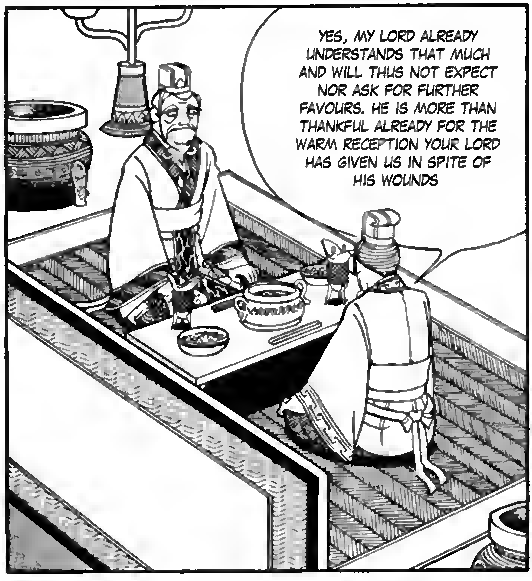
56

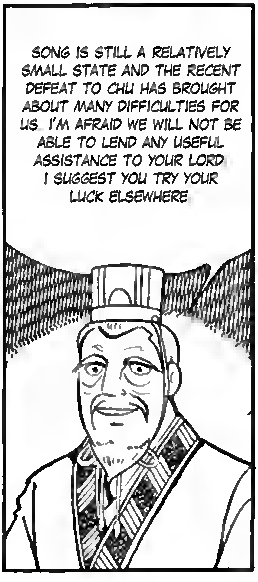
HOWEVER, HE DID NOT LET HIS INJURIES STOP HIM FROM PERSONALLY GIVING CHONG'ER A WARM RECEPTION.

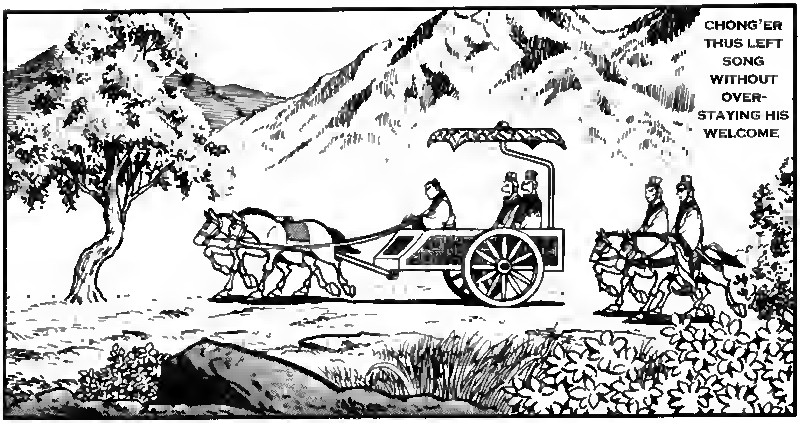

IT WAS DURING THIS STAY THAT ONE OF SONG'S MINISTERS SAID THUS TO JIU FAN, CHONG'ER'S UNCLE AS WELL AS HIS RETAINER..

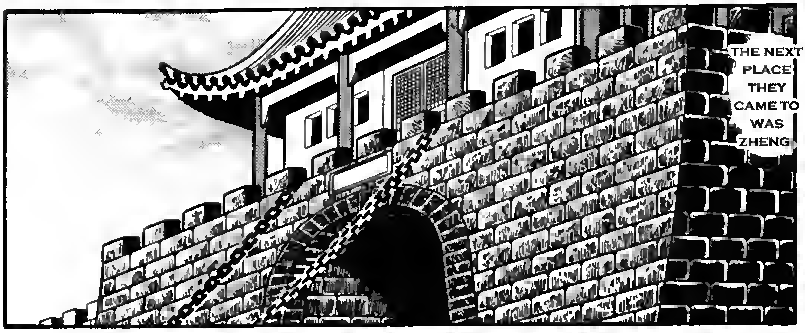
DO YOU NOW?
JIU FAN, I FULLY UNDERSTAND WHY YOUR LORD HAS COME TO SONG.

57


YES, MY LORD ALREADY UNDERSTANDS THAT MUCH AND WILL THUS NOT EXPECT NOR ASK FOR FURTHER FAVOURS. HE IS MORE THAN THANKFUL ALREADY FOR THE WARM RECEPTION YOUR LORD HAS GIVEN US IN SPITE OF HIS WOUNDS

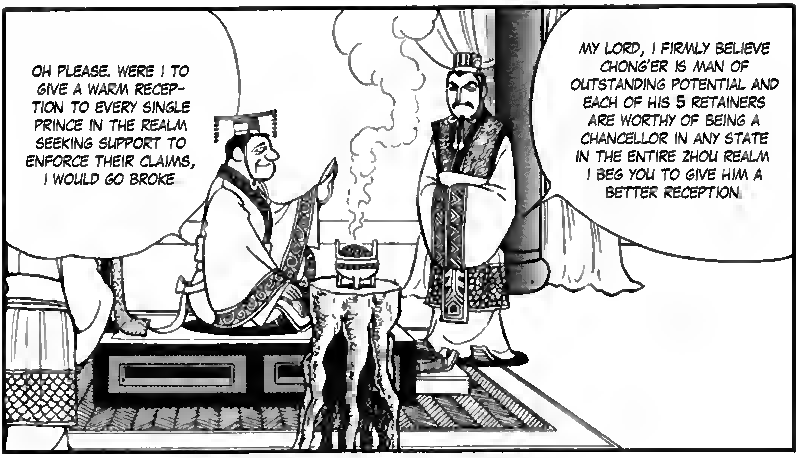

SONG IS STILL A RELATIVELY SMALL STATE AND THE RECENT DEFEAT TO CHU HAS BROUGHT ABOUT MANY DIFFICULTIES FOR US. I'M AFRAID WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO LEND ANY USEFUL ASSISTANCE TO YOUR LORD. I SUGGEST YOU TRY YOUR LUCK ELSEWHERE

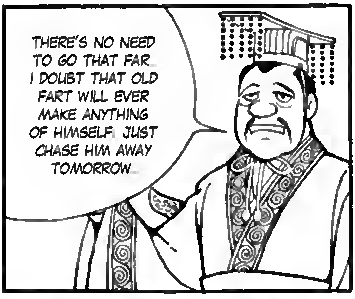

CHONG'ER THUS LEFT SONG WITHOUT OVER-STAYING HIS WELCOME.

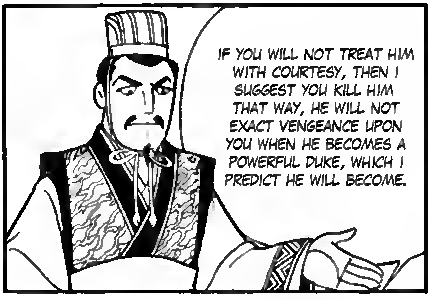

THE NEXT PLACE THEY CAME TO WAS ZHENG.

58

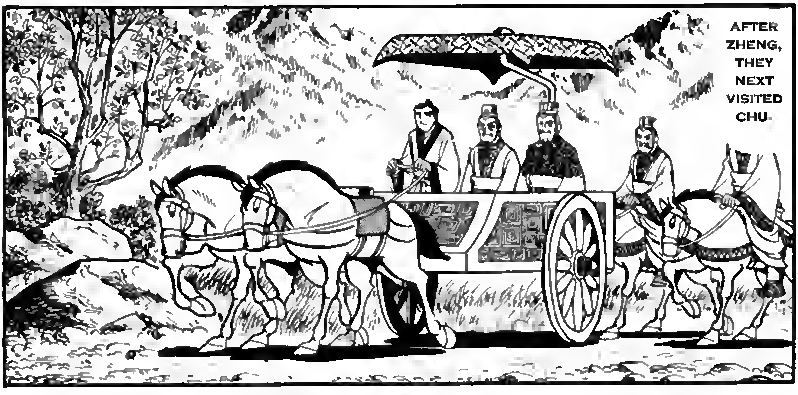
HOWEVER, DUKE WEN OF ZHENG WAS A PETTY LORD WHO GAVE CHONG'ER THE COLD SHOULDER.


OH PLEASE. WERE I TO GIVE A WARM RECEPTION TO EVERY SINGLE PRINCE IN THE REALM SEEKING SUPPORT TO ENFORCE THEIR CLAIMS, I WOULD GO BROKE
MY LORD, I FIRMLY BELIEVE CHONG'ER IS MAN OF OUTSTANDING POTENTIAL AND EACH OF HIS 5 RETAINERS ARE WORTHY OF BEING A CHANCELLOR IN ANY STATE IN THE ENTIRE ZHOU REALM I BEG YOU TO GIVE HIM A BETTER RECEPTION


THERE'S NO NEED TO GO THAT FAR. I DOUBT THAT OLD FART WILL EVER MAKE ANYTHING OF HIMSELF. JUST CHASE HIM AWAY TOMORROW

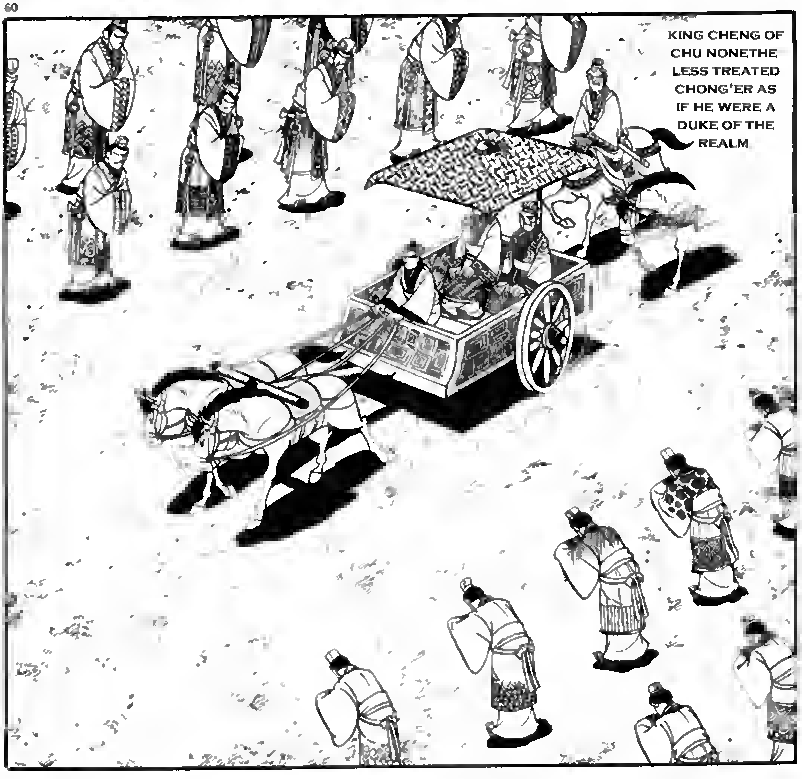

IF YOU WILL NOT TREAT HIM WITH COURTESY, THEN I SUGGEST YOU KILL HIM THAT WAY, HE WILL NOT EXACT VENGEANCE UPON YOU WHEN HE BECOMES A POWERFUL DUKE, WHICH I PREDICT HE WILL BECOME.

59


AFTER ZHENG, THEY NEXT VISITED CHU.

CHU WAS THE DOMINANT POWER IN THE SOUTH AND ITS RULER HAD DARED TO TITLE HIMSELF KING SINCE THE 8TH CENTURY B.C. UNLIKE THE OTHER DUKES OF THE REALM.

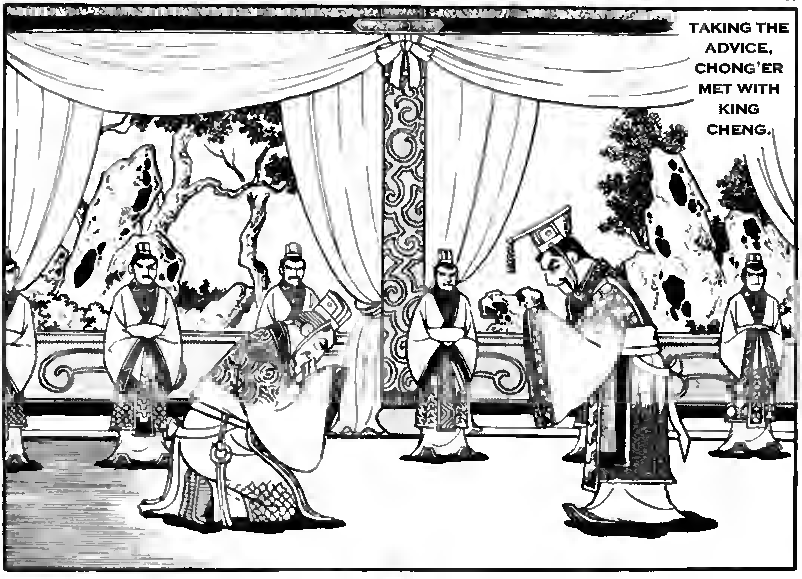
60


KING CHENG OF CHU NONETHELESS TREATED CHONG'ER AS IF HE WERE A DUKE OF THE REALM.

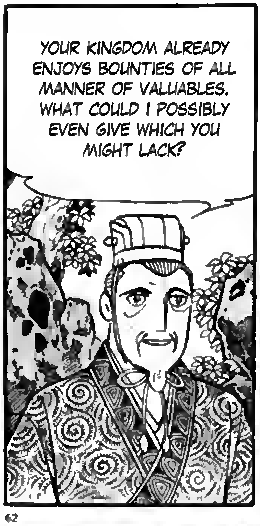
NO, NO. IN FACT, YOU SHOULD WELCOME IT.
ZHOU CUI, I'M ONLY A MERE POLITICAL EXILE AND YET KING CHENG IS TREATING ME AS IF I WERE A PROPER DUKE DON'T YOU THINK I OUGHT TO DECLINE SUCH A LAVISH RECEPTION?

AFTER DECADES OF EXILE AND BEING GIVEN THE COLD SHOULDER BY VARIOUS MINOR DUKES, HEAVEN HAS FINALLY GRANTED YOU A GRAND WELCOME FROM ONE OF THE PREEMINENT RULERS OF THIS REALM. TAKE IT IN STRIDE AS A SIGN OF GREAT THINGS TO COME, MY LORD.

61


TAKING THE ADVICE, CHONG'ER MET WITH KING CHENG.

KING CHENG SPARED NO EXPENSE IN THE RECEPTION FOR HIS GUEST OF HONOUR


YOUR KINGDOM ALREADY ENJOYS BOUNTIES OF ALL MANNER OF VALUABLES. WHAT COULD I POSSIBLY EVEN GIVE WHICH YOU MIGHT LACK?

IF YOU WERE TO EVER SUCCEED IN BECOMING THE DUKE OF JIN, HOW WILL YOU REPAY THE KINDNESS I HAVE SHOWN YOU?

62

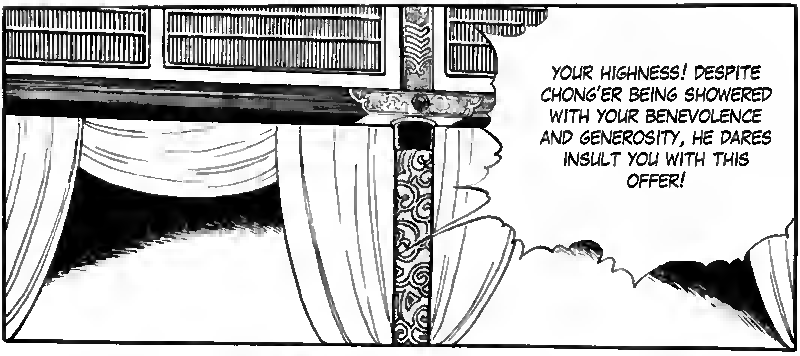
HAHA. STILL, YOU SHOULD GIVE ME ONE THING AT LEAST.

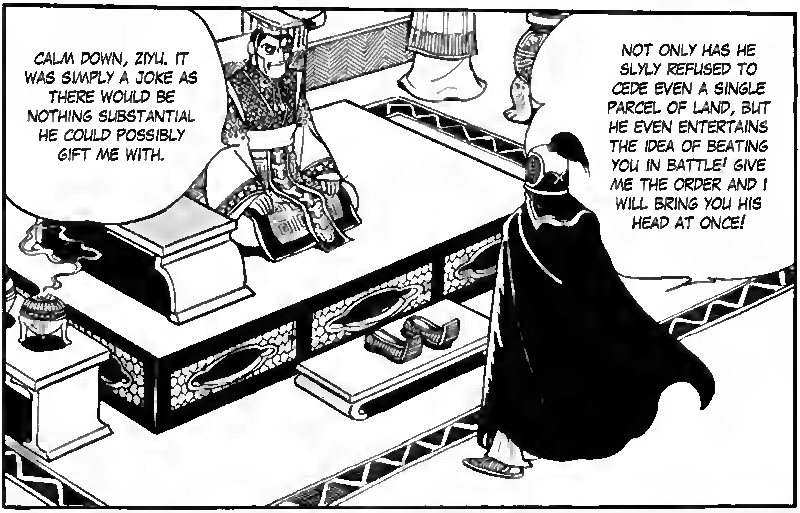
SHE WAS AN ANCIENT CHINESE UNIT OF LENGTH EQUIVALENT TO A DAY'S MARCH. THUS TO GIVE 3 SHE MEANT THAT CHONG'ER WOULD GIVE A HANDICAP OF RETREATING HIS TROOPS 3 DAYS STRAIGHT BEFORE FINALLY ORDERING AN ATTACK.
THEN HOW ABOUT THIS? IF BY THE TWIST OF FATE, WE WERE TO EVER FACE EACH OTHER IN BATTLE, I WILL GIVE 3 SHE. IF AND ONLY IF YOU DO NOT DESIRE A CEASE IN HOSTILITIES BY THEN, WILL I FINALLY ATTACK.

HAHAHA! NOW THAT'S QUITE THE INTERESTING GIFT!

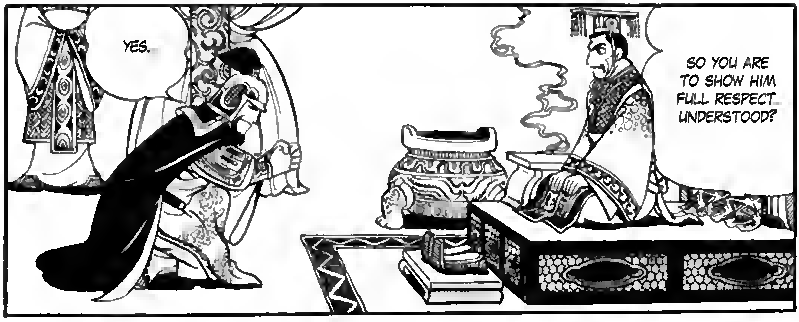
63

GENERAL ZIYU, ON THE OTHER HAND, WAS NOT AMUSED BY CHONG'ER'S REPLY WHEN HE WAS INFORMED OF THE INCIDENT.


YOUR HIGHNESS! DESPITE CHONG'ER BEING SHOWERED WITH YOUR BENEVOLENCE AND GENEROSITY, HE DARES INSULT YOU WITH THIS OFFER!


CALM DOWN, ZIYU. IT WAS SIMPLY A JOKE AS THERE WOULD BE NOTHING SUBSTANTIAL HE COULD POSSIBLY GIFT ME WITH.
NOT ONLY HAS HE SLYLY REFUSED TO CEDE EVEN A SINGLE PARCEL OF LAND, BUT HE EVEN ENTERTAINS THE IDEA OF BEATING YOU IN BATTLE! GIVE ME THE ORDER AND I WILL BRING YOU HIS HEAD AT ONCE!

MORE IMPORTANTLY, I CAN SEE GREAT TALENT THAT HAS BEEN NURTURED THROUGH THE DIFFICULTIES OF LIVING IN EXILE FOR DECADES. IF GIVEN THE RIGHT CHANCE, HE WILL CERTAINLY BECOME THE KIND OF MAN AROUND WHOM GREAT KINGDOMS ARE BUILT. MEN LIKE CHONG'ER ARE THE ONES WORTH MAKING FRIENDS WITH



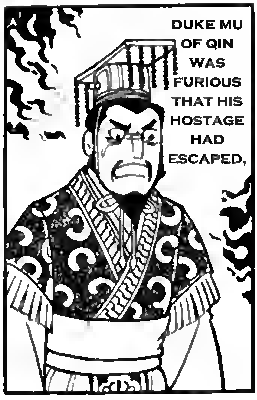
YEARS LATER, WHEN CHU ATTACKED SONG, CHONG'ER ENTHUSIASTICALLY CAME TO THE LATTER'S AID, REMEMBERING HIS DEBT TO DUKE XIANG OF SONG. AT THE CLIMACTIC BATTLE, CHONG'ER ALSO KEPT HIS PROMISE TO KING CHENG BY RETREATING HIS TROOPS FOR 3 DAYS, LEADING THE CHU FORCES WAS NONE OTHER THAN ZIYU, WHO WAS STILL DETERMINED TO ATTACK NO MATTER WHAT.

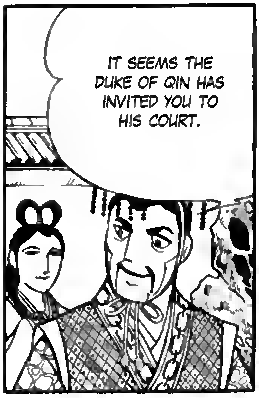
AT THE FIELDS OF CHENGPU, THE TWO SIDES CLASHED AT LAST AND CHONG'ER DEFEATED CHU AND HER ALLIES, WHICH INCLUDED ZHENG. THUS DID CHONG'ER REPAY HIS DEBTS, FULFILL HIS PROMISE, AND PUNISH THOSE WHO DISRESPECTED HIM IN THE PAST.

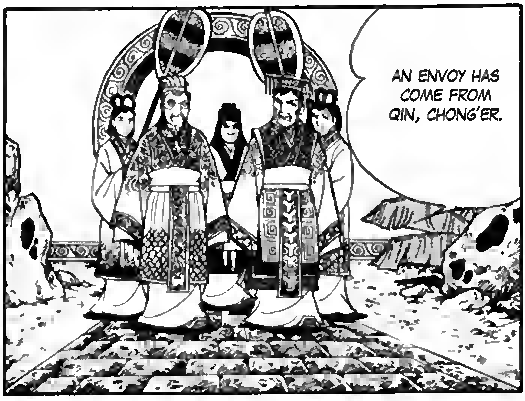
65

HE WAS EAGER TO CLAIM HIS THRONE BEFORE THE OTHER PRINCES STILL IN JIN MADE THE FIRST MOVE.
UPON HEARING THE NEWS OF HIS FATHER'S DEATH, PRINCE YU, WHO HAD BEEN LIVING AS A HOSTAGE IN QIN, ESCAPED AND RETURNED TO JIN.

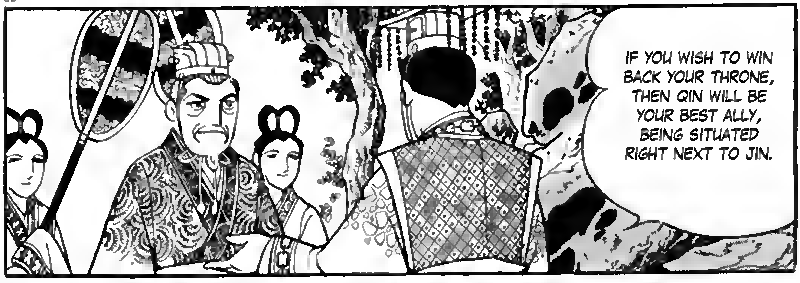
AND UPON HEARING THAT CHONG'ER WAS IN CHU, HE SENT AN INVITATION.


DUKE MU OF QIN WAS FURIOUS THAT HIS HOSTAGE HAD ESCAPED.


IT SEEMS THE DUKE OF QIN HAS INVITED YOU TO HIS COURT.

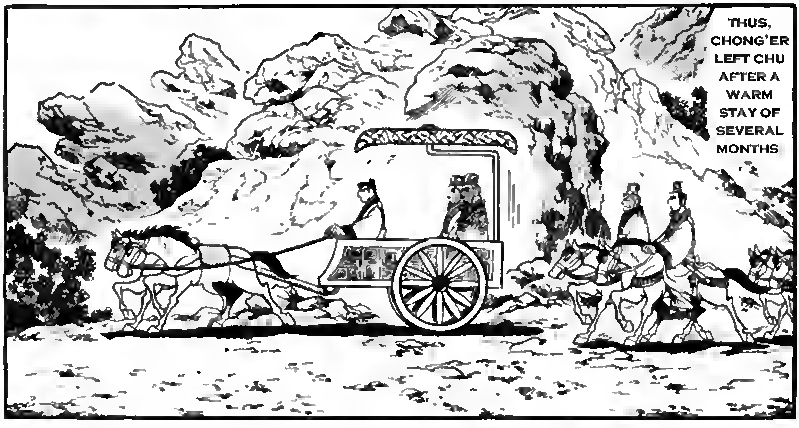

AN ENVOY HAS COME FROM QIN, CHONG'ER.

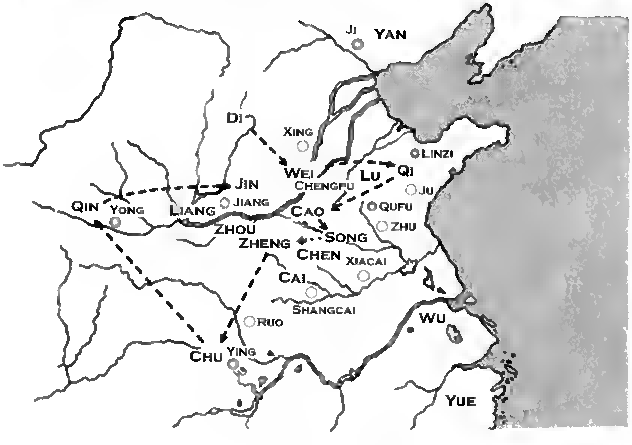
66


IF YOU WISH TO WIN BACK YOUR THRONE, THEN QIN WILL BE YOUR BEST ALLY, BEING SITUATED RIGHT NEXT TO JIN.

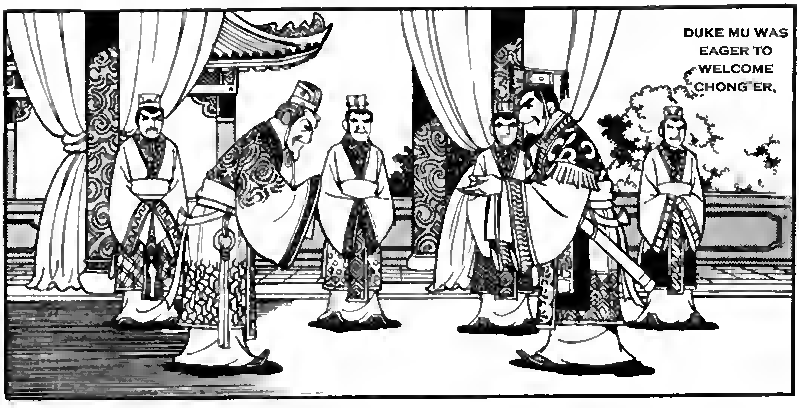
OF COURSE, I UNDERSTAND.
AS MUCH AS I WOULD LIKE TO HELP, CHU IS LOCATED SO FAR SOUTH THAT I WOULD HAVE TO MARCH MY TROOPS THROUGH MANY SOVEREIGN STATES IF I WERE TO SUPPORT YOU.

67





CHONG'ER'S TRAVELS


DUKE MU WAS EAGER TO WELCOME CHONG'ER.

AND THUS GAVE HIM 5 NOBLE WOMEN.

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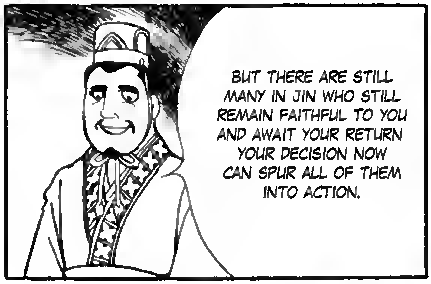
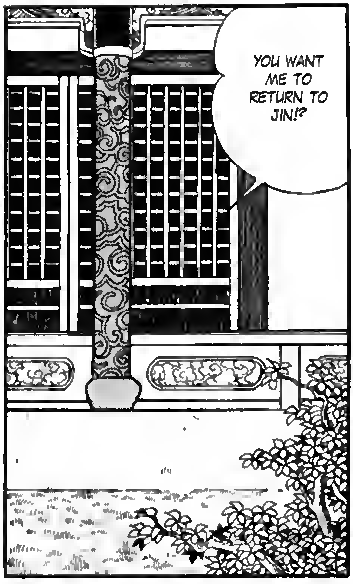
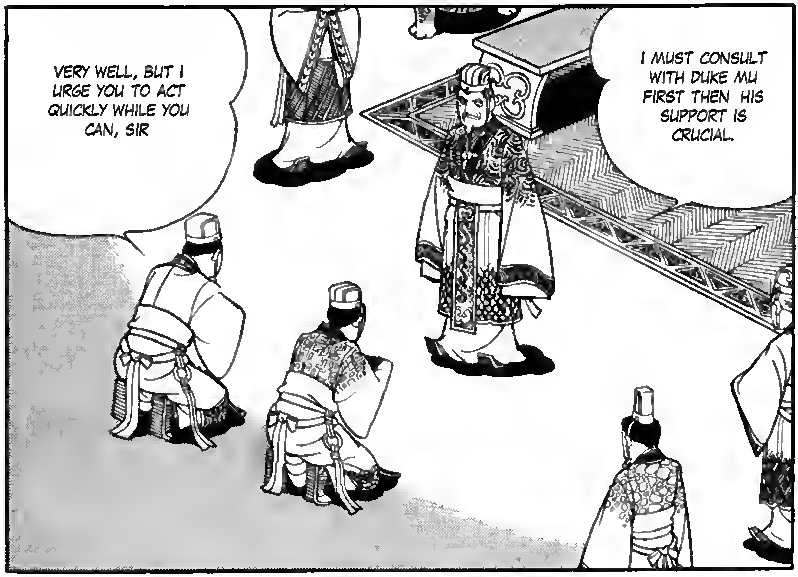
ONLY THREE MONTHS AFTER COMING TO QIN, CHONG'ER WAS SECRETLY VISITED BY TWO MEN FROM JIN.

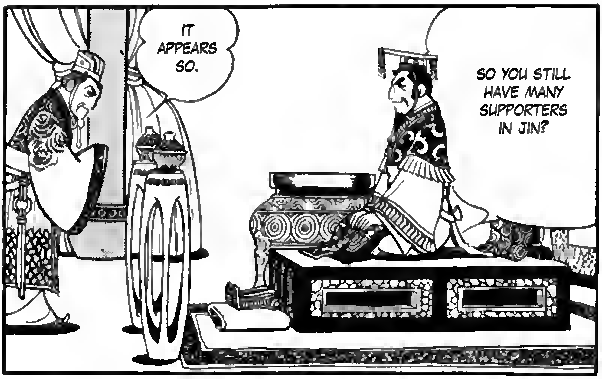
YES, PRINCE YU MAY HAVE RECENTLY BEEN ENTHRONED AS DUKE HUAI,

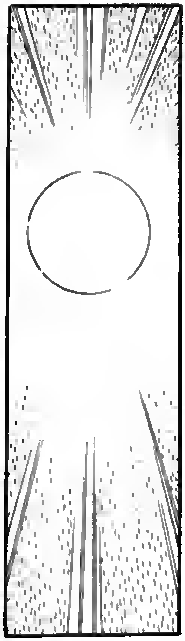

BUT THERE ARE STILL MANY IN JIN WHO STILL REMAIN FAITHFUL TO YOU AND AWAIT YOUR RETURN YOUR DECISION NOW CAN SPUR ALL OF THEM INTO ACTION.


YOU WANT ME TO RETURN TO JIN!?

69


VERY WELL, BUT I URGE YOU TO ACT QUICKLY WHILE YOU CAN, SIR
I MUST CONSULT WITH DUKE MU FIRST THEN HIS SUPPORT IS CRUCIAL.


IT APPEARS SO.
SO YOU STILL HAVE MANY SUPPORTERS IN JIN?



THEN WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR? I OF ALL PEOPLE AM EAGER TO SEE A NEW DUKE OF JIN WHO CAN ACTUALLY KEEP HIS WORD!

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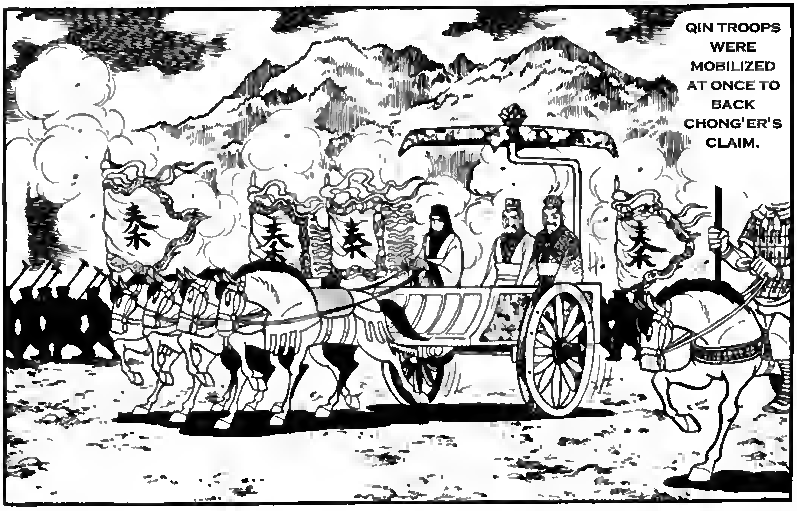
QIN TROOPS WERE MOBILIZED AT ONCE TO BACK CHONG'ER'S CLAIM.
秦
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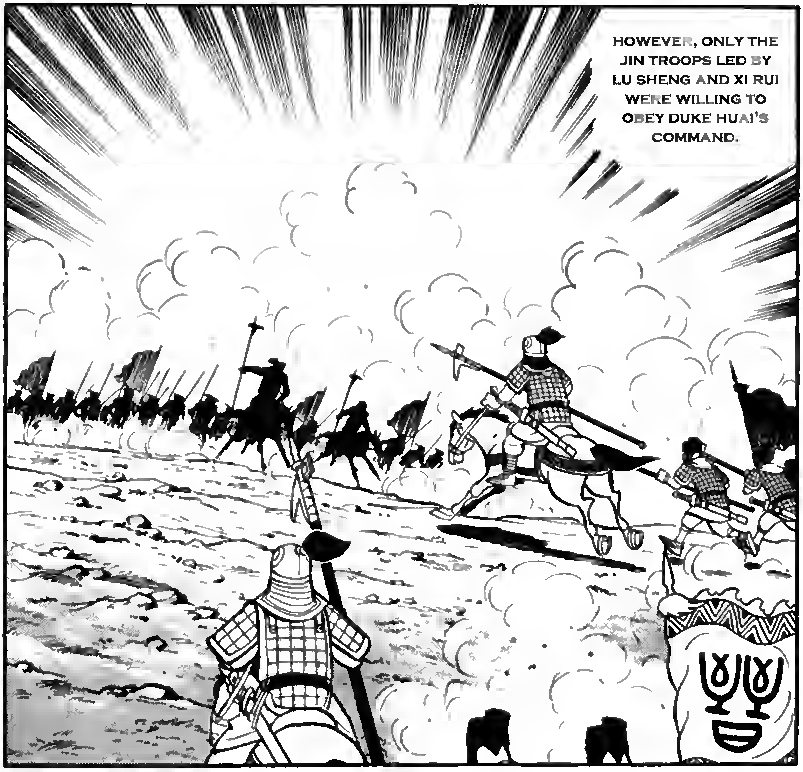
UPON HEARING THIS CHALLENGE, DUKE HUAI OF JIN MOBILIZED HIS TROOPS AS WELL.

71


HOWEVER, ONLY THE JIN TROOPS LED BY LU SHENG AND XI RUI WERE WILLING TO OBEY DUKE HUAI'S COMMAND.

PRINCE CHONG'ER IS THE RIGHTFUL DUKE OF JIN!
THE OTHER TROOPS, LED BY SECRET SUPPORTERS OF CHONG'ER, TURNED AGAINST DUKE HUAI.

ATTACKED BY BOTH QIN AND JIN TROOPS,

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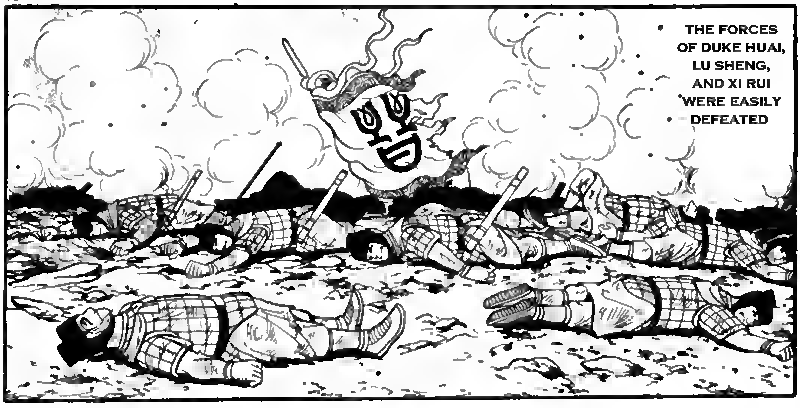
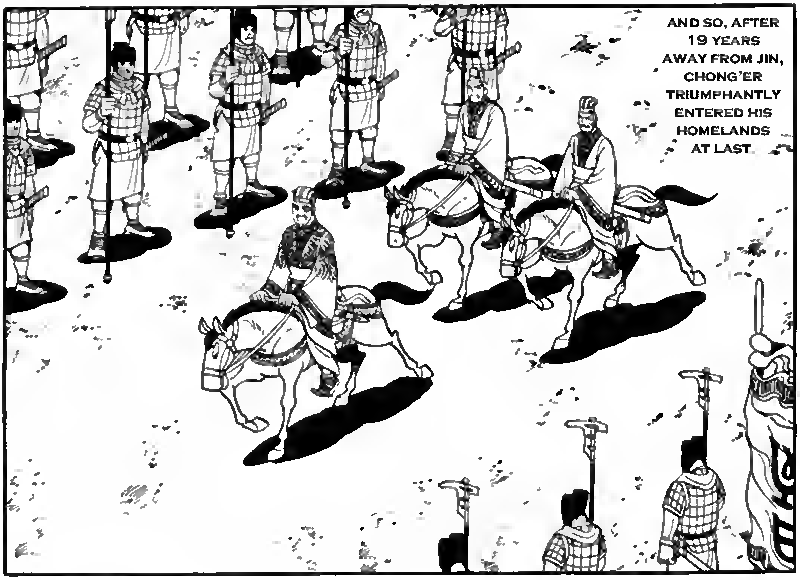

THE FORCES OF DUKE HUAI, LU SHENG, AND XI RUI WERE EASILY DEFEATED


AND SO, AFTER 19 YEARS AWAY FROM JIN, CHONG'ER TRIUMPHANTLY ENTERED HIS HOMELANDS AT LAST.

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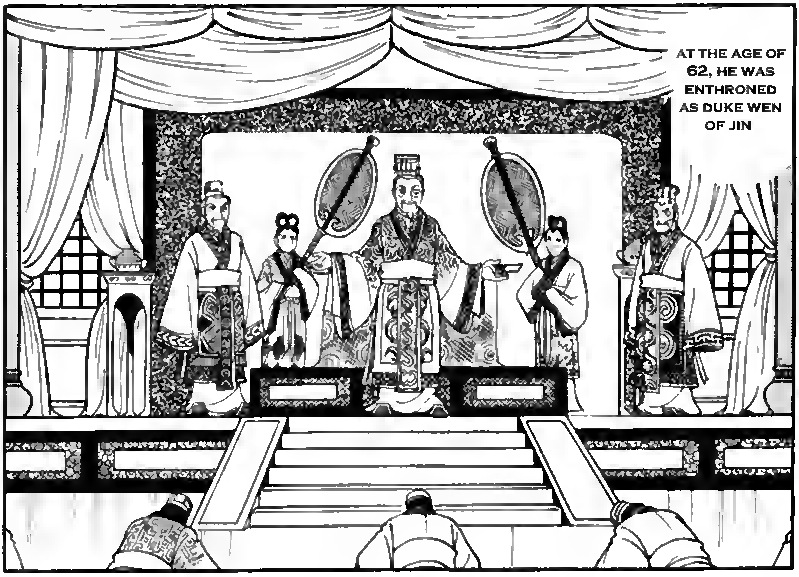
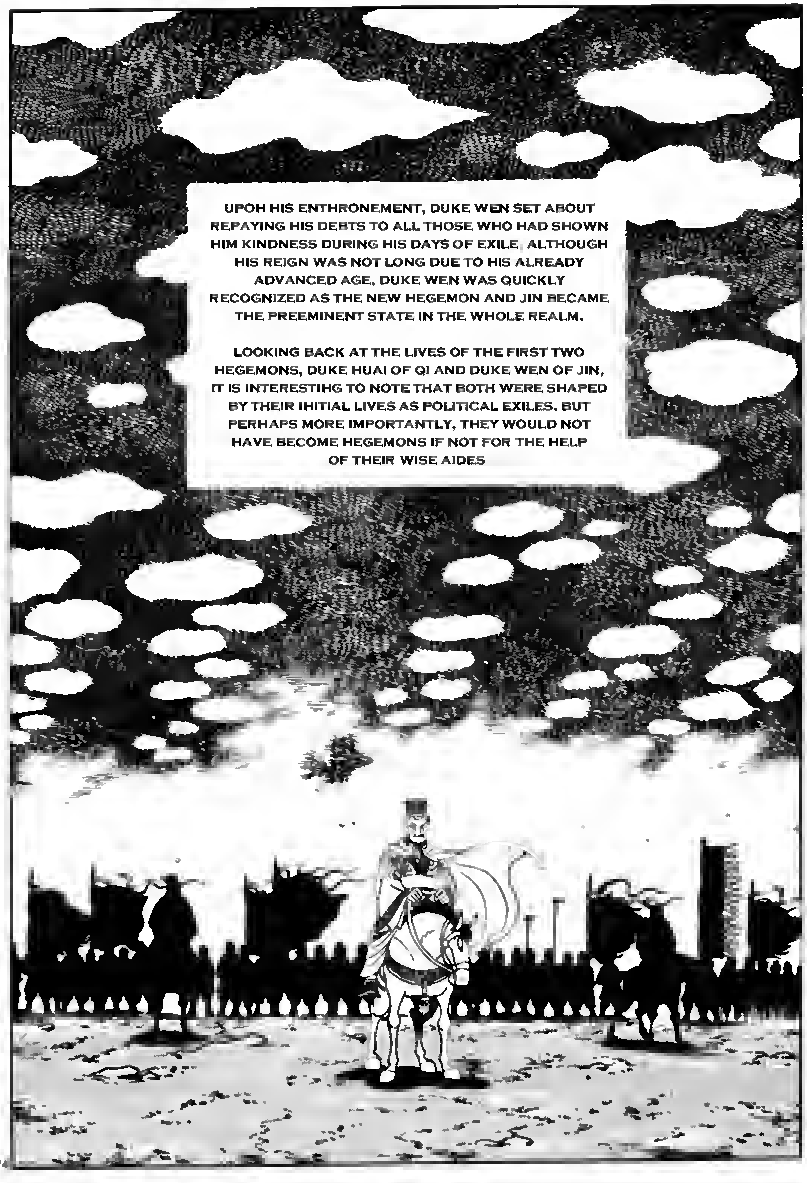

AT THE AGE OF 62, HE WAS ENTHRONED AS DUKE WEN OF JIN


UPOH HIS ENTHRONEMENT, DUKE WEN SET ABOUT REPAYING HIS DEBTS TO ALL THOSE WHO HAD SHOWN HIM KINDNESS DURING HIS DAYS OF EXILE. ALTHOUGH HIS REIGN WAS NOT LONG DUE TO HIS ALREADY ADVANCED AGE, DUKE WEN WAS QUICKLY RECOGNIZED AS THE NEW HEGEMON AND JIN BECAME THE PREEMINENT STATE IN THE WHOLE REALM.
LOOKING BACK AT THE LIVES OF THE FIRST TWO HEGEMONS, DUKE HUAI OF QI AND DUKE WEN OF JIN, IT IS INTERESTIHG TO NOTE THAT BOTH WERE SHAPED BY THEIR IHITIAL LIVES AS POLITICAL EXILES. BUT PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANTLY, THEY WOULD NOT HAVE BECOME HEGEMONS IF NOT FOR THE HELP OF THEIR WISE AIDES

BIG GOLD COMICS
ビッグゴールドコミックス

史記
覇者への道
1

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